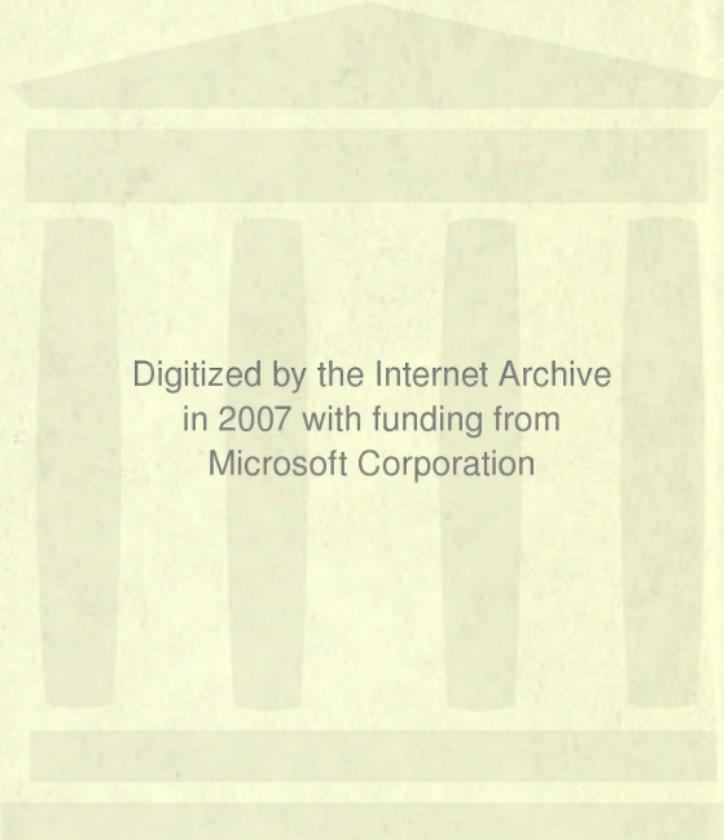


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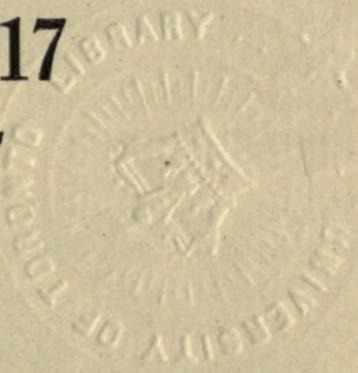
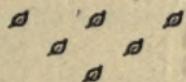
# GEORGIAN POETRY

*Published November 1917*

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# GEORGIAN POETRY

1916-1917



TWELFTH THOUSAND

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TO

EDMUND GOSSE

## PREFATORY NOTE

THIS third book of *Georgian Poetry* carries to the end of a seventh year the presentation of chosen examples from the work of contemporary poets belonging to the younger generation. Of the eighteen writers included, nine appear in the series for the first time. The representation of the older inhabitants has in most cases been restricted in order to allow full space for the newcomers ; and the alphabetical order of the names has been reversed, so as to bring more of these into prominence than would otherwise have been done.

My thanks for permission to print the poems are due to Messrs. Chatto & Windus, Constable, Fifield, Heinemann, Macmillan, Elkin Mathews, Martin Secker, and Sidgwick & Jackson, and to the Editors of the *Nation*, the *New Statesman*, *Saturday Westminster*, and *To-Day*.

E. M.

September 1917.



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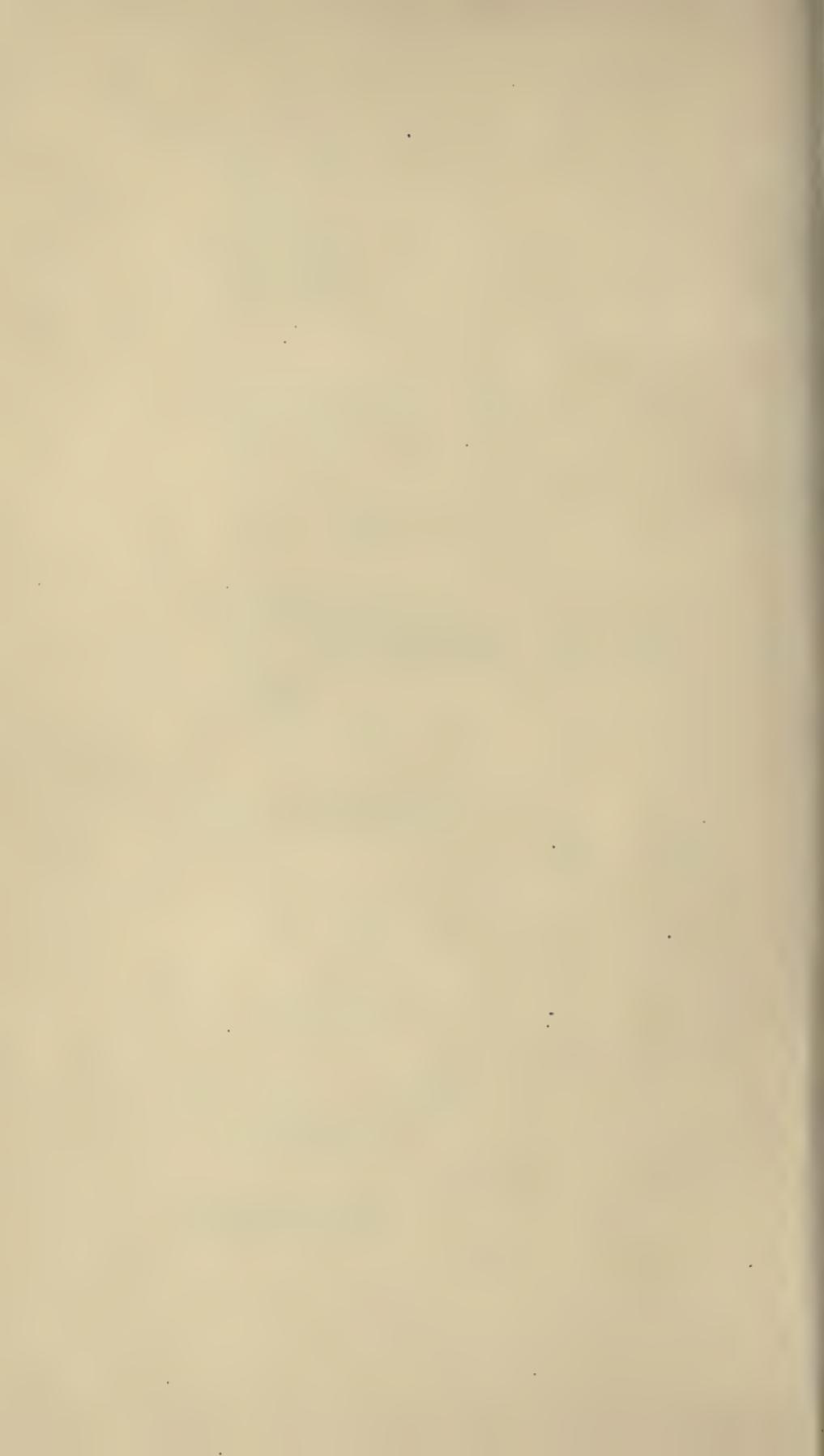
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W. J. TURNER



## ROMANCE

W. J.  
Turner

When I was but thirteen or so  
I went into a golden land,  
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi  
Took me by the hand.

My father died, my brother too,  
They passed like fleeting dreams,  
I stood where Popocatapetl  
In the sunlight gleams.

I dimly heard the master's voice  
And boys far-off at play,  
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi  
Had stolen me away.

I walked in a great golden dream  
To and fro from school—  
Shining Popocatapetl  
The dusty streets did rule.

I walked home with a gold dark boy  
And never a word I'd say,  
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi  
Had taken my speech away :

I gazed entranced upon his face  
Fairer than any flower—  
O shining Popocatapetl  
It was thy magic hour :

W. J.  
Turner

The houses, people, traffic seemed  
Thin fading dreams by day,  
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi  
They had stolen my soul away !

## ECSTASY

W. J.  
Turner

I saw a frieze on whitest marble drawn  
Of boys who sought for shells along the shore,  
Their white feet shedding pallor in the sea,  
The shallow sea, the spring-time sea of green  
That faintly creamed against the cold, smooth  
pebbles.

The air was thin, their limbs were delicate,  
The wind had graven their small eager hands  
To feel the forests and the dark nights of Asia  
Behind the purple bloom of the horizon,  
Where sails would float and slowly melt away.

Their naked, pure, and grave, unbroken silence  
Filled the soft air as gleaming, limpid water  
Fills a spring sky those days when rain is lying  
In shattered bright pools on the wind-dried roads,  
And their sweet bodies were wind-purified.

One held a shell unto his shell-like ear  
And there was music carven in his face,  
His eyes half-closed, his lips just breaking open  
To catch the lulling, mazy, coralline roar  
Of numberless caverns filled with singing seas.

And all of them were hearkening as to singing  
Of far-off voices thin and delicate,  
Voices too fine for any mortal wind  
To blow into the whorls of mortal ears—  
And yet those sounds flowed from their grave,  
sweet faces.

W. J.  
Turner

And as I looked I heard that delicate music,  
And I became as grave, as calm, as still  
As those carved boys. I stood upon that shore,  
I felt the cool sea dream around my feet,  
My eyes were staring at the far horizon :

And the wind came and purified my limbs,  
And the stars came and set within my eyes,  
And snowy clouds rested upon my shoulders,  
And the blue sky shimmered deep within me,  
And I sang like a carven pipe of music.

## MAGIC

W. J.  
Turner

I love a still conservatory

That's full of giant, breathless palms,  
Azaleas, clematis and vines,  
Whose quietness great Trees becalms  
Filling the air with foliage,  
A curved and dreamy statuary.

I like to hear a cold, pure rill

Of water trickling low, afar  
With sudden little jerks and purls  
Into a tank or stoneware jar,  
The song of a tiny sleeping bird  
Held like a shadow in its trill.

I love the mossy quietness

That grows upon the great stone flags,  
The dark tree-ferns, the staghorn ferns,  
The prehistoric, antlered stags  
That carven stand and stare among  
The silent, ferny wilderness.

And are they birds or souls that flit

Among the trees so silently,  
And are they fish or ghosts that haunt  
The still pools of the rockery!—  
For I am but a sculptured rock  
As in that magic place I sit,

Still as a great jewel is the air

With boughs and leaves smooth-carved in it,  
And rocks and trees and giant ferns,  
And blooms with inner radiance lit,  
And naked water like a nymph  
That dances tireless slim and bare.

I watch a white Nyanza float  
Upon a green, untroubled pool,  
A fairyland Ophelia, she  
Has cast herself in water cool,  
And lies while fairy cymbals ring  
Drowned in her fairy castle moat.

The goldfish sing a winding song  
Below her pale and waxen face,  
The water-nymph is dancing by  
Lifting smooth arms with mournful grace,  
A stainless white dream she floats on  
While fairies beat a fairy gong.

Silent the Cattleyas blaze  
And thin red orchid shapes of Death  
Peer savagely with twisted lips  
Sucking an eerie, phantom breath  
With that bright, spotted, fever'd lust  
That watches lonely travellers craze.

Gigantic, mauve and hairy leaves  
Hang like obliterated faces  
Full of dim unattained expression  
Such as haunts virgin forest places  
When Silence leaps among the trees  
And the echoing heart deceives.

## THE HUNTER

W. J.  
Turner

"But there was one land he dared not enter."

Beyond the blue, the purple seas,  
Beyond the thin horizon's line,  
Beyond Antilla, Hebrides,  
Jamaica, Cuba, Caribbees,  
There lies the land of Yucatan.

The land, the land of Yucatan,  
The low coast breaking into foam,  
The dim hills where my thoughts shall roam  
The forests of my boyhood's home,  
The splendid dream of Yucatan !

I met thee first long, long ago  
Turning a printed page, and I  
Stared at a world I did not know  
And felt my blood like fire flow  
At that strange name of Yucatan.

O those sweet, far-off Austral days  
When life had a diviner glow,  
When hot Suns whipped my blood to know  
Things all unseen, then I could go  
Into thy heart O Yucatan !

I have forgotten what I saw,  
I have forgotten what I knew,  
And many lands I've set sail for  
To find that marvellous spell of yore,  
Never to set foot on thy shore  
O haunting land of Yucatan !

W. J.  
Turner

But sailing I have passed thee by,  
And leaning on the white ship's rail  
Watched thy dim hills till mystery  
Wrapped thy far stillness close to me  
And I have breathed 'tis Yucatan u

' 'Tis Yucatan, 'tis Yucatan !'  
The ship is sailing far away,  
The coast recedes, the dim hills fade,  
A bubble-winding track we've made,  
And thou'rt a Dream O Yucatan !

## THE SKY-SENT DEATH

W. J.  
Turner

"A German aeroplane flew over Greek territory dropping a bomb which killed a shepherd."

*Sitting on a stone a Shepherd,  
Stone and Shepherd sleeping,  
Under the high blue Attic sky ;  
Along the green monotony  
Grey sheep creeping, creeping.*

Deep down on the hill and valley,  
At the bottom of the sunshine,  
Like great Ships in clearest water,  
Water holding anchored Shadows,  
Water without wave or ripple,  
Sunshine deep and clear and heavy,  
Sunshine like a booming bell  
Made of purest golden metal,  
White Ships heavy in the sky  
Sleep with anchored shadow.

Pipe a song in that still air  
And the song would be of crystal  
Snapped in silence, or a bronze vase  
Smooth and graceful, curved and shining.  
Tell an old tale or a history ;  
It would seem a slow Procession  
Full of gestures ; limbs and torso  
White and rounded in the sunlight.

*Sitting on a stone a Shepherd,  
Stone and Shepherd sleeping,  
Like a fragment of old marble  
Dug up from the hillside shadow.*

In the sunshine deep and soundless  
Came a faint metallic humming ;  
In the sunshine clear and heavy  
Came a speck, a speck of shadow—  
Shepherd lift your head and listen,  
Listen to that humming Shadow !

*Sitting on a stone the Shepherd,  
Stone and Shepherd sleeping  
In a sleep dreamless as water,  
Water in a white glass beaker,  
Clear, pellucid, without shadow ;  
Underneath a sky-blue crystal  
Sees his grey sheep creeping.*

In the sunshine clear and heavy  
| Shadow-fled a dark hand downward :  
In the sunshine deep and soundless  
Burst a star-dropt thing of thunder—  
Smoked the burnt blue air's torn veiling  
Drooping softly round the hillside.

Boomed the silence in returning  
To the crater in the hillside,  
To the red earth fresh and bleeding,  
To the mangled heap remaining :  
Far away that humming Shadow  
Vanished in the azure distance.

*Sitting on a stone no Shepherd,  
Stone and Shepherd sleeping,  
But across the hill and valley  
Grey sheep creeping, creeping,  
Standing carven on the sky-line,  
Scattering in the open distance,  
Free, in no man's keeping.*

## THE CAVES OF AUVERGNE

W. J.  
Turner

He carved the red deer and the bull  
Upon the smooth cave rock,  
Returned from war with belly full,  
And scarred with many a knock,  
He carved the red deer and the bull  
Upon the smooth cave rock.

The stars flew by the cave's wide door,  
The clouds wild trumpets blew,  
Trees rose in wild dreams from the floor,  
Flowers with dream faces grew  
Up to the sky, and softly hung  
Golden and white and blue.

The woman ground her heap of corn,  
Her heart a guarded fire ;  
The wind played in his trembling soul  
Like a hand upon a lyre,  
The wind drew faintly on the stone  
Symbols of his desire :

The red deer of the forest dark,  
Whose antlers cut the sky,  
That vanishes into the mirk  
And like a dream flits by,~  
And by an arrow slain at last  
Is but the wind's dark body.~

The bull that stands in marshy lakes  
As motionless and still  
As a dark rock jutting from a plain  
Without a tree or hill ;  
The bull that is the sign of life,  
Its sombre, phallic will.

W. J.  
Turner

And from the dead, white eyes of them  
The wind springs up anew,  
It blows upon the trembling heart,  
And bull and deer renew  
Their flitting life in the dim past  
When that dead Hunter drew.

I sit beside him in the night,  
And, fingering his red stone,  
I chase through endless forests dark  
Seeking that thing unknown,  
That which is not red deer or bull,  
But which by them was shown :

By those stiff shapes in which he drew  
His soul's exalted cry,  
When flying down the forest dark  
He slew and knew not why,  
When he was filled with song, and strength  
Flowed to him from the sky.

The wind blows from red deer and bull,  
The clouds wild trumpets blare,  
Trees rise in wild dreams from the earth,  
Flowers with dream faces stare,  
*O Hunter, your own shadow stands  
Within your forest lair !*

JAMES STEPHENS



## THE FIFTEEN ACRES

James  
Stephens

I cling and swing  
On a branch, or sing  
Through the cool, clear hush of  
Morning, O :  
Or fling my wing  
On the air, and bring  
To sleepier birds a warning, O :  
That the night's in flight,  
And the sun's in sight,  
And the dew is the grass adorning, O :  
And the green leaves swing  
As I sing, sing, sing,  
Up by the river,  
Down the dell,  
To the little wee nest,  
Where the big tree fell,  
So early in the morning, O.  
  
I flit and twit  
In the sun for a bit  
When his light so bright is shining, O :  
Or sit and fit  
My plumes, or knit  
Straw plaits for the nest's nice lining, O :  
And she with glee  
Shows unto me  
Underneath her wings reclining, O :  
And I sing that Peg  
Has an egg, egg, egg,  
Up by the oat-field,  
Round the mill,  
Past the meadow,  
Down the hill,  
So early in the morning, O.

James  
Stephens

I stoop and swoop  
On the air, or loop  
Through the trees, and then go soaring, O :  
    To group with a troop  
    On the gusty poop  
While the wind behind is roaring, O :  
    I skim and swim  
    By a cloud's red rim  
And up to the azure flooring, O :  
    And my wide wings drip  
    As I slip, slip, slip  
    Down through the rain-drops,  
    Back where Peg  
    Broods in the nest  
    On the little white egg,  
    So early in the morning, O.

## CHECK

James  
Stephens

The night was creeping on the ground ;  
She crept and did not make a sound  
Until she reached the tree, and then  
She covered it, and stole again  
Along the grass beside the wall.

I heard the rustle of her shawl  
As she threw blackness everywhere  
Upon the sky and ground and air,  
And in the room where I was hid :  
But no matter what she did  
To everything that was without,  
She could not put my candle out.

So I stared at the night, and she  
Stared back solemnly at me.

## WESTLAND ROW

Every Sunday there's a throng  
Of pretty girls, who trot along  
In a pious, breathless state  
(They are nearly always late)  
To the Chapel, where they pray  
For the sins of Saturday.

They have frocks of white and blue,  
Yellow sashes they have too,  
And red ribbons show each head  
Tenderly is ringleted ;  
And the bell rings loud, and the  
Railway whistles urgently.

After Chapel they will go,  
Walking delicately slow,  
Telling still how Father John  
Is so good to look upon,  
And such other grave affairs  
As they thought of during prayers.

## THE TURN OF THE ROAD

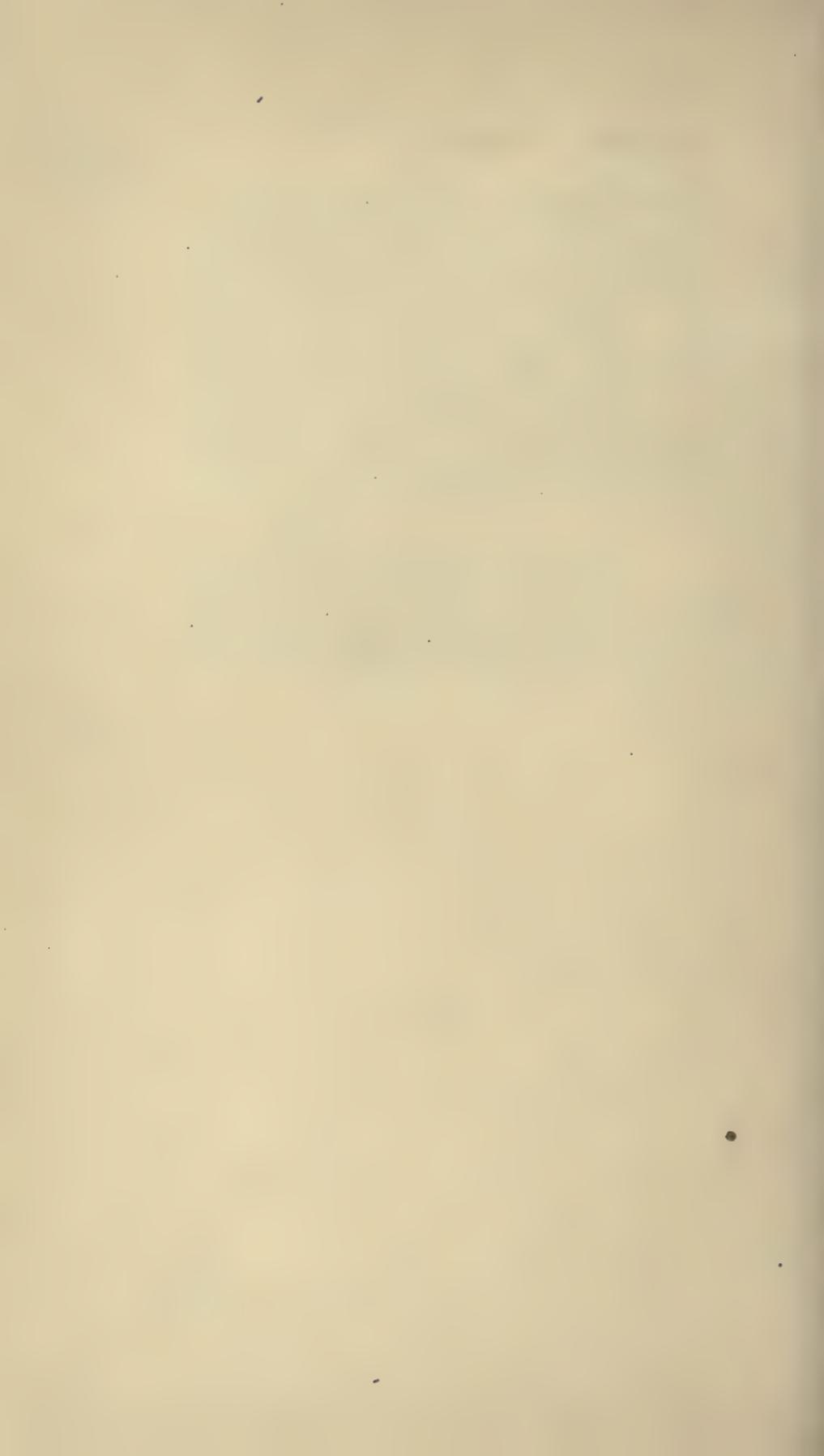
James  
Stephens

I was playing with my hoop along the road  
Just where the bushes are, when, suddenly,  
There came a shout,—I ran away and stowed  
Myself beneath a bush, and watched to see  
What made the noise, and then, around the bend,  
I saw a woman running. She was old  
And wrinkle-faced, and had big teeth.—The end  
Of her red shawl caught on a bush and rolled  
Right off her, and her hair fell down.—Her face  
Was awful white, and both her eyes looked sick,  
And she was talking queer. '*O God of Grace!*'  
Said she, '*where is the child?*' and flew back  
quick  
The way she came, and screamed, and shook her  
hands;  
... Maybe she was a witch from foreign lands.

## A VISIT FROM ABROAD

A speck went blowing up against the sky  
As little as a leaf : then it drew near  
And broadened.—‘It’s a bird,’ said I,  
And fetched my bow and arrows. It was queer!  
It grew from up a speck into a blot,  
And squattered past a cloud ; then it flew down  
All crumply, and wagged such a lot  
I thought the thing would fall.—It was a brown  
Old carpet where a man was sitting snug  
Who, when he reached the ground, began to  
sew  
A big hole in the middle of the rug,  
And kept on peeping everywhere to know  
Who might be coming—then he gave a twist  
And flew away. . . . I fired at him but missed.

J. C. SQUIRE



## A HOUSE

J. C.  
Squire

Now very quietly, and rather mournfully,  
In clouds of hyacinth the sun retires,  
And all the stubble-fields that were so warm to him  
Keep but in memory their borrowed fires.

And I, the traveller, break, still unsatisfied,  
From that faint exquisite celestial strand,  
And turn and see again the only dwelling-place  
In this wide wilderness of darkening land.

The house, that house, O now what change has  
come to it.

Its crude red-brick façade, its roof of slate ;  
What imperceptible swift hand has given it  
A new, a wonderful, a queenly state ?

No hand has altered it, that parallelogram,  
So inharmonious, so ill-arranged ;  
That hard blue roof in shape and colour's what it  
was ;  
No, it is not that any line has changed.

Only that loneliness is now accentuate  
And, as the dusk unveils the heaven's deep cave,  
This small world's feebleness fills me with awe  
again,  
And all man's energies seem very brave.

And this mean edifice, which some dull architect  
Built for an ignorant earth-turning hind,  
Takes on the quality of that magnificent  
Unshakable dauntlessness of human kind.

J. C.  
Squire

Darkness and stars will come, and long the night  
    will be,

    Yet imperturbable that house will rest,  
    Avoiding gallantly the stars' chill scrutiny,  
    Ignoring secrets in the midnight's breast.

Thunders may shudder it, and winds demoniac  
    May howl their menaces, and hail descend ;  
Yet it will bear with them, serenely, steadfastly,  
    Not even scornfully, and wait the end.

And all a universe of nameless messengers  
    From unknown distances may whisper fear,  
And it will imitate immortal permanence,  
    And stare and stare ahead and scarcely hear.

It stood there yesterday ; it will to-morrow, too,  
    When there is none to watch, no alien eyes  
To watch its ugliness assume a majesty  
    From this great solitude of evening skies.

So lone, so very small, with worlds and worlds  
    around,  
    While life remains to it prepared to outface  
Whatever awful unconjectured mysteries  
    May hide and wait for it in time and space.

## TO A BULL-DOG

(*W. H. S., Capt. [Acting Major] R.F.A.,  
killed April 12, 1917*)

J. C.  
Squire

We shan't see Willy any more, Mamie,  
He won't be coming any more:  
He came back once and again and again,  
But he won't get leave any more.

We looked from the window and there was his cab,  
And we ran downstairs like a streak,  
And he said, 'Hullo, you bad dog,' and you  
crouched to the floor,  
Paralysed to hear him speak,

And then let fly at his face and his chest  
Till I had to hold you down,  
While he took off his cap and his gloves and his  
coat,  
And his bag and his thonged Sam Browne.

We went upstairs to the studio,  
The three of us, just as of old,  
And you lay down and I sat and talked to him  
As round the room he strolled. —

Here in the room where, years ago  
Before the old life stopped,  
He worked all day with his slippers and his pipe,  
He would pick up the threads he'd dropped,

Fondling all the drawings he had left behind,  
Glad to find them all still the same,  
And opening the cupboards to look at his belongings  
. . . Every time he came.

J. C.  
Squire

But now I know what a dog doesn't know,  
Though you'll thrust your head on my knee,  
And try to draw me from the absent-mindedness  
That you find so dull in me.

And all your life you will never know  
What I wouldn't tell you even if I could,  
That the last time we waved him away  
Willy went for good.

But sometimes as you lie on the hearthrug  
Sleeping in the warmth of the stove,  
Even through your muddled old canine brain  
Shapes from the past may rove.

You'll scarcely remember, even in a dream,  
How we brought home a silly little pup,  
With a big square head and little crooked legs  
That could scarcely bear him up,

But your tail will tap at the memory  
Of a man whose friend you were,  
Who was always kind though he called you a  
naughty dog  
When he found you on his chair;

Who'd make you face a reproving finger  
And solemnly lecture you  
Till your head hung downwards and you looked  
very sheepish :  
And you'll dream of your triumphs too,

Of summer evening chases in the garden  
When you dodged us all about with a bone :  
We were three boys, and you were the cleverest,  
But now we're two alone.

When summer comes again,  
And the long sunsets fade,  
We shall have to go on playing the feeble game for  
two  
That since the war we've played.

J. C.  
Squire

And though you run expectant as you always do  
To the uniforms we meet,  
You'll never find Willy among all the soldiers  
In even the longest street,

Nor in any crowd ; yet, strange and bitter thought,  
Even now were the old words said,  
If I tried the old trick and said 'Where's Willy ?'  
You would quiver and lift your head,

And your brown eyes would look to ask if I was  
serious,  
And wait for the word to spring.  
Sleep undisturbed : I shan't say *that* again,  
You innocent old thing.

I must sit, not speaking, on the sofa,  
While you lie asleep on the floor ;  
For he's suffered a thing that dogs couldn't dream  
of,  
And he won't be coming here any more.

## THE LILY OF MALUD

The lily of Malud is born in secret mud.  
It is breathed like a word in a little dark ravine  
Where no bird was ever heard and no beast was  
ever seen,  
And the leaves are never stirred by the panther's  
velvet sheen.

It blooms once a year in summer moonlight,  
In a valley of dark fear full of pale moonlight :  
It blooms once a year, and dies in a night,  
And its petals disappear with the dawn's first  
light ;  
And when that night has come, black small-  
breasted maids,  
With ecstatic terror dumb, steal fawn-like through  
the shades  
To watch, hour by hour, the unfolding of the flower.

When the world is full of night, and the moon reigns  
alone  
And drowns in silver light the known and the  
unknown,  
When each hut is a mound, half blue-silver and  
half black,  
And casts upon the ground the hard shadow of its  
back,  
When the winds are out of hearing and the tree-  
tops never shake,  
When the grass in the clearing is silent but awake  
'Neath a moon-paven sky : all the village is asleep  
And the babes that nightly cry dream deep :

From the doors the maidens creep,  
Tiptoe over dreaming curs, soft, so soft, that not  
one stirs,  
And stand curved and a-quiver, like bathers by a  
river,  
Looking at the forest wall, groups of slender naked  
girls,  
Whose black bodies shine like pearls where the  
moonbeams fall.

J. C.  
Squire

They have waked, they knew not why, at a sum-  
mons from the night,  
They have stolen fearfully from the dark to the  
light,  
Stepping over sleeping men, who have moved and  
slept again :  
And they know not why they go to the forest,  
but they know,  
As their moth-feet pass to the shore of the grass  
And the forest's dreadful brink, that their tender  
spirits shrink :  
They would flee, but cannot turn, for their eyelids  
burn  
With still frenzy, and each maid, ere she leaves the  
moonlit space,  
If she sees another's face is thrilled and afraid.

Now like little phantom fawns they thread the  
outer lawns  
Where the boles of giant trees stand about in twos  
and threes,  
Till the forest grows more dense and the darkness  
more intense,

And they only sometimes see in a lone moon-ray  
A dead and spongy trunk in the earth half-sunk,  
Or the roots of a tree with fungus grey,  
Or a drift of muddy leaves, or a banded snake that  
heaves.

And the towering unseen roof grows more intricate,  
and soon  
It is featureless and proof to the lost forgotten  
moon.  
But they could not look above as with blind-drawn  
feet they move  
Onwards on the scarce-felt path, with quick and  
desperate breath,  
For their circling fingers dread to caress some slimy  
head,  
Or to touch the icy shape of a hunched and hairy  
ape,  
And at every step they fear in their very midst to  
hear  
A lion's rending roar or a tiger's snore. . . .  
And when things swish or fall, they shiver but dare  
not call.

O what is it leads the way that they do not stray ?  
What unimagined arm keeps their bodies from  
harm ?  
What presence concealed lifts their little feet that  
yield  
Over dry ground and wet till their straining eyes  
are met  
With a thinning of the darkness ?

And the foremost faintly cries in awed surprise :  
And they one by one emerge from the gloom to  
the verge

J. C.  
Squire

Of a small sunken vale full of moonlight pale.  
And they hang along the bank, clinging to the  
branches dank,  
A shadowy festoon out of sight of the moon ;  
And they see in front of them, rising from the mud,  
A single straight stem and a single pallid bud  
In that little lake of light from the moon's calm  
height.

A stem, a ghostly bud, on the moon-swept mud  
That shimmers like a pond ; and over there be-  
yond

The guardian forest high, menacing and strange,  
Invades the empty sky with its wild black range.

And they watch hour by hour that small lonely  
flower

In that deep forest place that hunter never found.

It shines without sound, as a star in space.

And the silence all around that solitary place  
Is like silence in a dream ; till a sudden flashing  
gleam

Down their dark faces flies ; and their lips fall  
apart

And their glimmering great eyes with excitement  
dart

And their fingers, clutching the branches they were  
touching,

Shake and arouse hissing leaves on the boughs.

And they whisper aswoon : Did it move in the  
moon ?

O it moved as it grew !

It is moving, opening, with calm and gradual will  
And their bodies where they cling are shadowed  
and still,

And with marvel they mark that the mud now is  
dark,

For the unfolding flower, like a goddess in her  
power,

Challenges the moon with a light of her own,  
That lovelily grows as the petals unclose,  
Wider, more wide with an awful inward pride  
Till the heart of it breaks, and stilled is their breath,  
For the radiance it makes is as wonderful as death.

The morning's crimson stain tinges their ashen  
brows

As they part the last boughs and slowly step again  
On to the village grass, and chill and languid pass  
Into the huts to sleep.

Brief slumber, yet so deep  
That, when they wake to day, darkness and  
splendour seem

Broken and far-away, a faint miraculous dream ;  
And when those maidens rise they are as they  
ever were

Save only for a rare shade of trouble in their eyes.  
And the surly thick-lipped men, as they sit about  
their huts

Making drums out of guts, grunting gruffly now  
and then,

Carving sticks of ivory, stretching shields of  
wrinkled skin,

J. C.  
Squire

Smoothing sinister and thin squatting gods of  
ebony,

Chip and grunt and do not see.

But each mother, silently,  
Longer than her wont stays shut in the dimness of  
her hut,

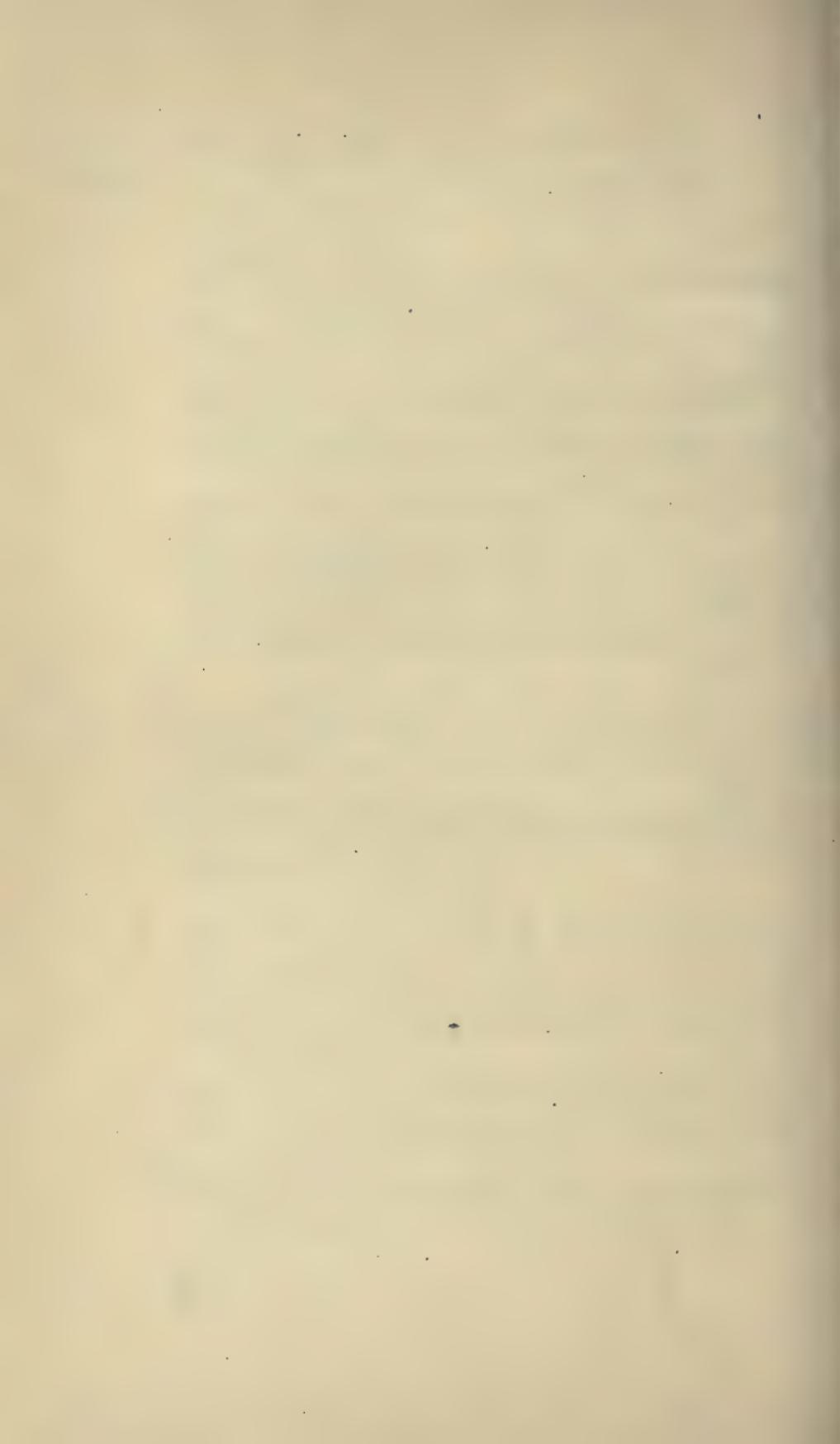
For she feels a brooding cloud of memory in the air,  
A lingering thing there that makes her sit bowed  
With hollow shining eyes, as the night-fire dies,  
And stare softly at the ember, and try to remem-  
ber,

Something sorrowful and far, something sweet and  
vaguely seen

Like an early evening star when the sky is pale  
green :

A quiet silver tower that climbed in an hour,  
Or a ghost like a flower, or a flower like a queen :  
Something holy in the past that came and did not  
last. . . .

But she knows not what it was.



SIEGFRIED SASSOON



A LETTER HOME  
(*To Robert Graves*)

Siegfried  
Sassoon

I

Here I'm sitting in the gloom  
Of my quiet attic room.  
France goes rolling all around,  
Fledged with forest May has crowned.  
And I puff my pipe, calm-hearted,  
Thinking how the fighting started,  
Wondering when we'll ever end it,  
Back to Hell with Kaiser send it,  
Gag the noise, pack up and go,  
Clockwork soldiers in a row.  
I've got better things to do  
Than to waste my time on you.

II

Robert, when I drowse to-night,  
Skirting lawns of sleep to chase  
Shifting dreams in mazy light,  
Somewhere then I'll see your face  
Turning back to bid me follow  
Where I wag my arms and hollo,  
Over hedges hastening after  
Crooked smile and baffling laughter,  
Running tireless, floating, leaping,  
Down your web-hung woods and valleys,  
Garden glooms and hornbeam alleys,  
Where the glowworm stars are peeping,  
Till I find you, quiet as stone  
On a hill-top all alone,  
Staring outward, gravely pondering  
Jumbled leagues of hillock-wandering.

*Ruth & Beeches*

You and I have walked together  
In the starving winter weather.  
We've been glad because we knew  
Time's too short and friends are few.  
We've been sad because we missed  
One whose yellow head was kissed  
By the gods, who thought about him  
Till they couldn't do without him.  
Now he's here again ; I've seen  
Soldier David dressed in green,  
Standing in a wood that swings  
To the madrigal he sings.  
He's come back, all mirth and glory,  
Like the prince in a fairy story.  
Winter called him far away ;  
Blossoms bring him home with May.

Well, I know you'll swear it's true  
That you found him decked in blue  
Striding up through morning-land  
With a cloud on either hand.  
Out in Wales, you'll say, he marches  
Arm-in-arm with oaks and larches ;  
Hides all night in hilly nooks,  
Laughs at dawn in tumbling brooks.  
Yet, it's certain, here he teaches  
Outpost-schemes to groups of beeches.  
And I'm sure, as here I stand,  
That he shines through every land,  
That he sings in every place  
Where we're thinking of his face.

Robert, there's a war in France ;  
Everywhere men bang and blunder,  
Sweat and swear and worship Chance,  
Creep and blink through cannon thunder.  
Rifles crack and bullets flick,  
Sing and hum like hornet-swarms.  
Bones are smashed and buried quick,  
Yet, through stunning battle storms,  
All the while I watch the spark  
Lit to guide me ; for I know  
Dreams will triumph, though the dark  
Scowls above me where I go.  
*You* can hear me ; *you* can mingle  
Radiant folly with my jingle.  
War's a joke for me and you  
While we know such dreams are true !

Siegfried  
Sassoon

## THE KISS

To these I turn, in these I trust ;  
Brother Lead and Sister Steel.  
To his blind power I make appeal ;  
I guard her beauty clean from rust.

He spins and burns and loves the air,  
And splits a skull to win my praise ;  
But up the nobly marching days  
She glitters naked, cold and fair.

Sweet Sister, grant your soldier this ;  
That in good fury he may feel  
The body where he sets his heel  
Quail from your downward darting kiss.

## THE DRAGON AND THE UNDYING

Siegfried  
Sassoon

All night the flares go up ; the Dragon sings  
And beats upon the dark with furious wings ;  
And, stung to rage by his own darting fires,  
Reaches with grappling coils from town to town ;  
He lusts to break the loveliness of spires,  
And hurls their martyred music toppling down.

Yet, though the slain are homeless as the breeze,  
Vocal are they, like storm-bewilder'd seas.  
Their faces are the fair, unshrouded night,  
And planets are their eyes, their ageless dreams.  
Tenderly stooping earthward from their height,  
They wander in the dusk with chanting streams ;  
And they are dawn-lit trees, with arms up-flung,  
To hail the burning heavens they left unsung.

Return to greet me, colours that were my joy,  
Not in the woeful crimson of men slain,  
But shining as a garden ; come with the streaming  
Banners of dawn and sundown after rain.

I want to fill my gaze with blue and silver,  
Radiance through living roses, spires of green  
Rising in young-limbed copse and lovely wood,  
Where the hueless wind passes and cries unseen.

I am not sad ; only I long for lustre,—  
Tired of the greys and browns and the leafless ash.  
I would have hours that move like a glitter of  
dancers  
Far from the angry guns that boom and flash.

Return, musical, gay with blossom and fleetness,  
Days when my sight shall be clear and my heart  
rejoice ;  
Come from the sea with breadth of approaching  
brightness,  
When the blithe wind laughs on the hills with up-  
lifted voice.

‘THEY’

Siegfried  
Sassoon

The Bishop tells us : ‘ When the boys come back  
They will not be the same ; for they’ll have fought  
In a just cause : they lead the last attack  
On Anti-Christ ; their comrades’ blood has bought  
New right to breed an honourable race.  
They have challenged Death and dared him face  
to face.’

‘ We’re none of us the same ! ’ the boys reply.  
For George lost both his legs ; and Bill’s stone  
blind ;  
Poor Jim’s shot through the lungs and like to die ;  
And Bert’s gone syphilitic ; you’ll not find  
A chap who’s served that hasn’t found *some*  
change.’  
And the Bishop said : ‘ The ways of God are  
strange ! ’

'IN THE PINK'

So Davies wrote: 'This leaves me in the pink.'  
Then scrawled his name: 'Your loving sweet-  
heart, Willie'

With crosses for a hug. He'd had a drink  
Of rum and tea; and, though the barn was chilly,  
For once his blood ran warm; he had pay to  
spend.

Winter was passing; soon the year would mend.

He couldn't sleep that night. Stiff in the dark  
He groaned and thought of Sundays at the farm,  
When he'd go out as cheerful as a lark  
In his best suit to wander arm-in-arm  
With brown-eyed Gwen, and whisper in her ear  
The simple, silly things she liked to hear.

And then he thought: to-morrow night we trudge  
Up to the trenches, and my boots are rotten.  
Five miles of stodgy clay and freezing sludge,  
And everything but wretchedness forgotten.  
To-night he's in the pink; but soon he'll die.  
And still the war goes on; *he* don't know why.

## HAUNTED

Siegfried  
Sassoon

Evening was in the wood, louring with storm.  
A time of drought had sucked the weedy pool,  
And baked the channels ; birds had done with  
song.]

Thirst was a dream of fountains in the moon,  
Or willow-music blown across the water  
Leisurely sliding on by weir and mill.

Uneasy was the man who wandered, brooding,  
His face a little whiter than the dusk.  
A drone of sultry wings flicker'd in his head.

The end of sunset burning thro' the boughs  
Died in a smear of red ; exhausted hours  
Cumber'd, and ugly sorrows hemmed him in.]

He thought : ' Somewhere there's thunder,' as he  
strode  
To shake off dread ; he dared not look behind him,  
But stood, the sweat of horror on his face.

He blundered down a path, trampling on thistles,  
In sudden race to leave the ghostly trees.  
And : ' Soon I'll be in open fields,' he thought,  
And half remembered starlight on the meadows,  
Scent of mown grass and voices of tired men,  
Fading along the field-paths ; home and sleep  
And cool-swept upland spaces, whispering leaves,  
And far off the long churring night-jar's note.

Siegfried  
Sassoon

But something in the wood, trying to daunt him,  
Led him confused in circles through the brake.  
He was forgetting his old wretched folly,  
And freedom was his need ; his throat was choking ;  
Barbed brambles gripped and clawed him round his  
legs,  
And he floundered over snags and hidden stumps.  
Mumbling : ' I will get out ! I must get out ! '  
Butting and thrusting up the baffling gloom,  
Pausing to listen in a space 'twixt thorns,  
He peers around with boding, frantic eyes.  
An evil creature in the twilight looping  
Flapped blindly in his face. Beating it off,  
He screeched in terror, and straightway something  
clambered  
Heavily from an oak, and dropped, bent double,  
To shamble at him zigzag, squat and bestial.

Death

Headlong he charges down the wood, and falls  
With roaring brain—agony—the snapt spark—  
And blots of green and purple in his eyes.  
Then the slow fingers groping on his neck,  
And at his heart the strangling clasp of death.

## THE DEATH-BED

Siegfried  
Sassoon

He drowsed and was aware of silence heaped  
Round him, unshaken as the steadfast walls ;  
Aqueous like floating rays of amber light,  
Soaring and quivering in the wings of sleep,—  
Silence and safety ; and his mortal shore  
Lipped by the inward, moonless waves of death.

Some one was holding water to his mouth.  
He swallowed, unresisting ; moaned and dropped  
Through crimson gloom to darkness ; and forgot  
The opiate throb and ache that was his wound.  
Water—calm, sliding green above the weir ;  
Water—a sky-lit alley for his boat,  
Bird-voiced, and bordered with reflected flowers  
And shaken hues of summer : drifting down,  
He dipped contented oars, and sighed, and slept.

Night, with a gust of wind, was in the ward,  
Blowing the curtain to a glimmering curve.  
Night. He was blind ; he could not see the stars  
Glinting among the wraiths of wandering cloud ;  
Queer blots of colour, purple, scarlet, green,  
Flickered and faded in his drowning eyes.

Rain ; he could hear it rustling through the dark  
Fragrance and passionless music woven as one ;  
Warm rain on drooping roses ; pattering showers  
That soak the woods ; not the harsh rain that  
sweeps  
Behind the thunder, but a trickling peace  
Gently and slowly washing life away.

•      •      •      •      •

Siegfried  
Sassoon

He stirred, shifting his body ; then the pain  
Leaped like a prowling beast, and gripped and tore  
His groping dreams with grinding claws and fangs.  
But some one was beside him ; soon he lay  
Shuddering because that evil thing had passed.  
And Death, who'd stepped toward him, paused and  
stared.

Light many lamps and gather round his bed.  
Lend him your eyes, warm blood, and will to live.  
Speak to him ; rouse him ; you may save him yet.  
He's young ; he hated war ; how should he die  
When cruel old campaigners win safe through ?

But Death replied : ' I choose him.' So he went,  
And there was silence in the summer night ;  
Silence and safety ; and the veils of sleep.  
Then, far away, the thudding of the guns.

I. ROSENBERG



‘AH, KOELUE . . .’

I. Rosen-  
berg

Ah, Koelue !

Had you embalmed your beauty, so  
It could not backward go,  
Or change in any way,  
What were the use, if on my eyes  
The embalming spices were not laid  
To keep us fixed,  
Two amorous sculptures passioned endlessly ?  
What were the use, if my sight grew,  
And its far branches were cloud-hung,  
You small at the roots, like grass,  
While the new lips my spirit would kiss  
Were not red lips of flesh,  
But the huge kiss of power ?  
Where yesterday soft hair through my fingers fell,  
A shaggy mane would entwine,  
And no slim form work fire to my thighs,  
But human Life’s inarticulate mass  
Throb the pulse of a thing  
Whose mountain flanks awry  
Beg my mastery—mine !  
Ah ! I will ride the dizzy beast of the world  
My road—my way !



ROBERT NICHOLS



TO—

Robert  
Nichols

Asleep within the deadest hour of night  
And turning with the earth, I was aware  
How suddenly the eastern curve was bright,  
As when the sun arises from his lair.  
But not the sun arose : it was thy hair  
Shaken up heaven in tossing leagues of light.

Since then I know that neither night nor day  
May I escape thee, O my heavenly hell !  
Awake, in dreams, thou springest to waylay ;  
And should I dare to die, I know full well  
Whose voice would mock me in the mourning bell,  
Whose face would greet me in hell's fiery way.

## THE ASSAULT

The beating of the guns grows louder.  
'*Not long, boys, now.*'

My heart burns whiter, fearfuller, prouder.  
Hurricanes grow  
As guns redouble their fire.  
Through the shaken periscope peeping,  
I glimpse their wire :  
Black earth, fountains of earth rise, leaping,  
Spouting like shocks of meeting waves,  
Death's fountains are playing,  
Shells like shrieking birds rush over ;  
Crash and din rises higher.  
A stream of lead raves  
Over us from the left . . . (we safe under cover !)  
Crash ! Reverberation ! Crash !  
Acrid smoke billowing. Flash upon flash.  
Black smoke drifting. The German line  
Vanishes in confusion, smoke. Cries, and cry  
Of our men, '*Gah, yer swine !*'  
*Ye're for it,* die  
In a hurricane of shell.

One cry :  
'*We're comin' soon ! look out !*'

There is opened hell  
Over there ; fragments fly,  
Rifles and bits of men whirled at the sky :  
Dust, smoke, thunder ! A sudden bout  
Of machine guns chattering . . .  
And redoubled battering,  
As if in fury at their daring ! . . .

No good staring.

Time soon now . . . home . . . house on a sunny hill . . . Robert Nichols

Gone like a flickered page :

Time soon now . . . zero . . . will engage . . .

A sudden thrill—

‘ Fix bayonets ! ’

Gods ! we have our fill

Of fear, hysteria, exultation, rage,

Rage to kill.

My heart burns hot, whiter and whiter,

Contracts tighter and tighter,

Until I stifle with the will

Long forged, now used

(Though utterly strained)—

O pounding heart,

Baffled, confused,

Heart panged, head singing, dizzily pained—

To do my part.

Blindness a moment. Sick.

There the men are !

Bayonets ready : click !

Time goes quick ;

A stumbled prayer . . . somehow a blazing star

In a blue night . . . where ?

Again prayer.

The tongue trips. Start :

How’s time ? Soon now. Two minutes or less.

The gun’s fury mounting higher . . .

Their utmost. I lift a silent hand. Unseen I bless

Those hearts will follow me.

And beautifully,

Now beautifully my will grips,

Soul calm and round and filmed and white !

Robert  
Nichols

A shout : ' Men, no such order as retire ! '

I nod.

The whistle's 'twixt my lips . . .

I catch

A wan, worn smile at me.

Dear men !

The pale wrist-watch . . .

The quiet hand ticks on amid the din.

The guns again

Rise to a last fury, to a rage, a lust :

Kill ! Pound ! Kill ! Pound ! Pound !

Now comes the thrust !

My part . . . dizziness . . . will . . . but trust

These men. The great guns rise ;

Their fury seems to burst the earth and skies !

They lift.

Gather, heart, all thoughts that drift ;

Be steel, soul,

Compress thyself

Into a round, bright whole.

I cannot speak.

Time. Time !

I hear my whistle shriek,

Between teeth set ;

I fling an arm up,

Scramble up the grime

Over the parapet !

I'm up. Go on.

Something meets us.

Head down into the storm that greets us.

A wail.  
Lights. Blurr.  
Gone.  
On, on. Lead. Lead. Hail.  
Spatter. Whirr! Whirr!  
*'Toward that patch of brown ;*  
*Direction left.'* Bullets a stream.  
Devouring thought crying in a dream.  
Men, crumpled, going down. . . .  
Go on. Go.  
Deafness. Numbness. The loudening tornado.  
Bullets. Mud. Stumbling and skating.  
My voice's strangled shout :  
*'Steady pace, boys !'*  
The still light : gladness.  
*'Look, sir. Look out !'*  
Ha ! ha ! Bunched figures waiting.  
Revolver levelled quick !  
Flick ! Flick !  
Red as blood.  
Germans. Germans.  
Good ! O good !  
Cool madness.

Robert  
Nichols

Was there love once ? I have forgotten her.  
Was there grief once ? grief yet is mine.  
Other loves I have, men rough, but men who stir  
More grief, more joy, than love of thee and thine.

Faces cheerful, full of whimsical mirth,  
Lined by the wind, burned by the sun ;  
Bodies enraptured by the abounding earth,  
As whose children we are brethren : one.

And any moment may descend hot death  
To shatter limbs ! pulp, tear, blast  
Beloved soldiers who love rough life and breath  
Not less for dying faithful to the last.

O the fading eyes, the grimed face turned bony,  
Opened mouth gushing, fallen head,  
Lessening pressure of a hand shrunk, clammed, and  
stony !  
O sudden spasm, release of the dead !

Was there love once ? I have forgotten her.  
Was there grief once ? grief yet is mine.  
O loved, living, dying, heroic soldier,  
All, all, my joy, my grief, my love, are thine !

# THE PHILOSOPHER'S ORATION

Robert  
Nichols

*(From 'A Faun's Holiday')*

Meanwhile, though nations in distress  
Cower at a comet's loveliness  
Shaken across the midnight sky ;  
Though the wind roars, and Victory,  
A virgin fierce, on vans of gold  
Stoops through the cloud's white smother rolled  
Over the armies' shock and flow  
Across the broad green hills below,  
Yet hovers and will not circle down  
To cast t'ward one the leafy crown ;  
Though men drive galleys' golden beaks  
To isles beyond the sunset peaks,  
And cities on the sea behold  
Whose walls are glass, whose gates are gold,  
Whose turrets, risen in an hour,  
Dazzle between the sun and shower,  
Whose sole inhabitants are kings  
Six cubits high with gryphon's wings  
And beard and mien more glorious  
Than Midas or Assaracus ;  
Though priests in many a hill-top fane  
Lift anguished hands—and lift in vain—  
Toward the sun's shaft dancing through  
The bright roof's square of wind-swept blue ;  
Though 'cross the stars nightly arise  
The silver fumes of sacrifice ;  
Though a new Helen bring new scars,  
Pyres piled upon wrecked golden cars,  
Stacked spears, rolled smoke, and spirits sped  
Like a streaked flame toward the dead :

Though all these be, yet grows not old  
Delight of sunned and windy wold,  
Of soaking downs aglare, asteam,  
Of still tarns where the yellow gleam  
Of a far sunrise slowly breaks,  
Or sunset strews with golden flakes  
The deeps which soon the stars will throng.

For earth yet keeps her undersong  
Of comfort and of ultimate peace,  
That whoso seeks shall never cease  
To hear at dawn or noon or night.  
Joys hath she, too, joys thin and bright,  
Too thin, too bright, for those to hear  
Who listen with an eager ear,  
Or course about and seek to spy,  
Within an hour, eternity.  
First must the spirit cast aside  
This world's and next his own poor pride  
And learn the universe to scan  
More as a flower, less as a man.  
Then shall he hear the lonely dead  
Sing and the stars sing overhead,  
And every spray upon the heath,  
And larks above and ants beneath ;  
The stream shall take him in her arms ;  
Blue skies shall rest him in their calms ;  
The wind shall be a lovely friend,  
And every leaf and bough shall bend  
Over him with a lover's grace.  
The hills shall bare a perfect face  
Full of a high solemnity ;  
The heavenly clouds shall weep, and be  
Content as overhead they swim  
To be high brothers unto him.

No more shall he feel pitched and hurled  
Uncomprehended into this world ;  
For every place shall be his place,  
And he shall recognize its face.  
At dawn he shall upon his path ;  
No sword shall touch him, nor the wrath  
Of the ranked crowd of clamorous men.  
At even he shall home again,  
And lay him down to sleep at ease,  
One with the Night and the Night's peace.  
Ev'n Sorrow, to be escaped of none,  
But a more deep communion  
Shall be to him, and Death at last  
No more dreaded than the Past,  
Whose shadow in the brain of earth  
Informs him now and gave him birth.

Robert  
Nichols

THE NAIADS' MUSIC  
(From 'A Faun's Holiday')

Come, ye sorrowful, and steep  
Your tired brows in a nectarous sleep :  
For our kisses lightlier run  
Than the traceries of the sun  
By the lolling water cast  
Up grey precipices vast,  
Lifting smooth and warm and steep  
Out of the palely shimmering deep.

Come, ye sorrowful, and take  
Kisses that are but half awake :  
For here are eyes O softer far  
Than the blossom of the star  
Upon the mothy twilit waters,  
And here are mouths whose gentle laughters  
Are but the echoes of the deep  
Laughing and murmur in its sleep.

Come, ye sorrowful, and see  
The raindrops flaming goldenly  
On the stream's eddies overhead  
And dragonflies with drops of red  
In the crisp surface of each wing  
Threading slant rains that flash and sing,  
Or under the water-lily's cup,  
From darkling depths, roll slowly up  
The bronze flanks of an ancient bream  
Into the hot sun's shattered beam,  
Or over a sunk tree's bubbled bole  
The perch stream in a golden shoal :  
Come, ye sorrowful ; our deep  
Holds dreams lovelier than sleep.

But if ye sons of Sorrow come  
Only wishing to be numb :  
Our eyes are sad as bluebell posies,  
Our breasts are soft as silken roses,  
And our hands are tenderer  
Than the breaths that scarce can stir  
The sunlit eglantine that is  
Murmurous with hidden bees.  
Come, ye sorrowful, and steep  
Your tired brows in a nectarous sleep.

Robert  
Nichols

Come, ye sorrowful, for here  
No voices sound but fond and clear  
Of mouths as lorn as is the rose  
That under water doth disclose,  
Amid her crimson petals torn,  
A heart as golden as the morn ;  
And here are tresses languorous  
As the weeds wander over us,  
And brows as holy and as bland  
As the honey-coloured sand  
Lying sun-entranced below  
The lazy water's limpid flow :  
Come, ye sorrowful, and steep  
Your tired brows in a nectarous sleep.

THE PROPHETIC BARD'S ORATION  
(From '*A Faun's Holiday*')

‘ Be warned ! I feel the world grow old,  
And off Olympus fades the gold  
Of the simple passionate sun ;  
And the Gods wither one by one :  
Proud-eyed Apollo’s bow is broken,  
And throned Zeus nods nor may be woken  
But by the song of spirits seven  
Quiring in the midnight heaven  
Of a new world no more forlorn,  
Sith unto it a Babe is born,  
That in a propped, thatched stable lies,  
While with darkling, reverent eyes  
Dusky Emperors, coifed in gold,  
Kneel mid the rushy mire, and hold  
Caskets of rubies, urns of myrrh,  
Whose fumes enwrap the thurifer  
And coil toward the high dim rafters  
Where, with lutes and warbling laughters,  
Clustered cherubs of rainbow feather,  
Fanning the fragrant air together,  
Flit in jubilant holy glee,  
And make heavenly minstrelsy  
To the Child their Sun, whose glow  
Bathes them His cloudlets from below. . . .  
Long shall this chimed accord be heard,  
Yet all earth hushed at His first word :  
Then shall be seen Apollo’s car  
Blaze headlong like a banished star ;  
And the Queen of heavenly Loves  
Dragged downward by her dying doves ;  
Vulcan, spun on a wheel, shall track  
The circle of the zodiac ;

Silver Artemis be lost,  
To the polar blizzards tossed ;  
Heaven shall curdle as with blood ;  
The sun be swallowed in the flood ;  
The universe be silent save  
For the low drone of winds that lave  
The shadowed great world's ashen sides  
As through the rustling void she glides.  
Then shall there be a whisper heard  
Of the Grave's Secret and its Word,  
Where in black silence none shall cry  
Save those who, dead-affrighted, spy  
How from the murmurous graveyards creep  
The figures of eternal sleep.  
Last : when 'tis light men shall behold,  
Beyond the crags, a flower of gold  
Blossoming in a golden haze,  
And, while they guess Zeus' halls now blaze,  
Shall in the blossom's heart descry  
The saints of a new hierarchy ! '

He ceased . . . and in the morning sky  
Zeus' anger threatened murmurously.  
I sped away. The lightning's sword  
Stabbed on the forest. But the word  
Abides with me. I feel its power  
Most darkly in the twilit hour,  
When Night's eternal shadow, cast  
Over earth hushed and pale and vast,  
Darkly foretells the soundless Night  
In which this orb, so green, so bright,  
Now spins, and which shall compass her  
When on her rondure nought shall stir  
But snow-whorls which the wind shall roll  
From the Equator to the Pole. . . .

Robert  
Nichols

Robert  
Nichols

For everlastingly there is  
Something Beyond, Behind : I wis  
All Gods are haunted, and there clings,  
As hound behind fled sheep, the things  
Beyond the Universe's ken :  
Gods haunt the Half-Gods, Half-Gods men,  
And Man the brute. Gods, born of Night,  
Feel a blacker appetite  
Gape to devour them ; Half-Gods dread  
But jealous Gods ; and mere men tread  
Warily lest a Half-God rise  
And loose on them from empty skies  
Amazement, thunder, stark affright,  
Famine and sudden War's thick night,  
In which loud Furies hunt the Pities  
Through smoke above wrecked, flaming cities.

For Pan, the Unknown God, rules all.  
He shall outlive the funeral,  
Change, and decay, of many Gods,  
Until he, too, lets fall his rods  
Of viewless power upon that minute  
When Universe cowers at Infinite !

## THE TOWER

Robert  
Nichols

It was deep night, and over Jerusalem's low roofs  
The moon floated, drifting through high vaporous  
woofs.

The moonlight crept and glistened silent, solemn,  
sweet,

Over dome and column, up empty, endless street ;  
In the closed, scented gardens the rose loosed from  
the stem

Her white showery petals ; none regarded them ;  
The starry thicket breathed odours to the sentinel  
palm ;

Silence possessed the city like a soul possessed by  
calm.

Not a spark in the warren under the giant night,  
Save where in a turret's lantern beamed a grave,  
still light :

There in the topmost chamber a gold-eyed lamp  
was lit—

Marvellous lamp in darkness, informing, redeem-  
ing it !

For, set in that tiny chamber, Jesus, the blessed  
and doomed,

Spoke to the lone apostles as light to men en-  
tombed ;

And spreading his hands in blessing, as one soon  
to be dead,

He put soft enchantment into spare wine and  
bread.

The hearts of the disciples were broken and full of  
tears,

Because their lord, the spearless, was hedgéd about  
with spears ;

Robert  
Nichols

And in his face the sickness of departure had  
spread a gloom,  
At leaving his young friends friendless.

They could not forget the tomb.  
He smiled subduedly, telling, in tones soft as voice  
of the dove,  
The endlessness of sorrow, the eternal solace of  
love ;  
And lifting the earthly tokens, wine and sorrowful  
bread,  
He bade them sup and remember one who lived  
and was dead.  
And they could not restrain their weeping.

But one rose up to depart,  
Having weakness and hate of weakness raging  
within his heart,  
And bowed to the robed assembly whose eyes  
gleamed wet in the light.  
Judas arose and departed : night went out to the  
night.

Then Jesus lifted his voice like a fountain in an  
ocean of tears,  
And comforted his disciples and calmed and  
allayed their fears.  
But Judas wound down the turret, creeping from  
floor to floor,  
And would fly ; but one leaning, weeping, barred  
him beside the door.  
And he knew her by her ruddy garment and two  
yet-watching men :  
Mary of Seven Evils, Mary Magdalen.  
And he was frightened at her. She sighed : ' I  
dreamed him dead.

We sell the body for silver. . . .

Robert

Then Judas cried out and fled Nichols  
Forth into the night! . . . The moon had begun  
to set:

A drear, deft wind went sifting, setting the dust  
afret;

Into the heart of the city Judas ran on and prayed  
To stern Jehovah lest his deed make him afraid.

But in the tiny lantern, hanging as if on air,  
The disciples sat unspeaking. Amaze and peace  
were there.

For *his* voice, more lovely than song of all earthly  
birds,

In accents humble and happy spoke slow, consoling  
words.

Thus Jesus discoursed, and was silent, sitting up-  
right, and soon

Past the casement behind him slanted the sinking  
moon;

And, rising for Olivet, all stared, between love and  
dread,

Seeing the torrid moon a ruddy halo behind his  
head.



HAROLD MONRO



## TWO POEMS

Harold  
Monro

(*Numbers 1 and x in 'Strange Meetings.'*)

### I

If suddenly a clod of earth should rise,  
And walk about, and breathe, and speak, and love,  
How one would tremble, and in what surprise  
Gasp : 'Can you move ?'

I see men walking, and I always feel :  
'Earth ! How have you done this ? What can  
you be ?'

I can't learn how to know men, or conceal  
How strange they are to me.

### II

A flower is looking through the ground,  
Blinking at the April weather ;  
Now a child has seen the flower :  
Now they go and play together.

Now it seems the flower will speak,  
And will call the child its brother—  
But, oh strange forgetfulness !—  
They don't recognize each other.

Since man has been articulate,  
Mechanical, improvidently wise,  
(Servant of Fate),  
He has not understood the little cries  
And foreign conversations of the small  
Delightful creatures that have followed him  
Not far behind ;  
Has failed to hear the sympathetic call  
Of Crockery and Cutlery, those kind  
Reposeful Teraphim  
Of his domestic happiness ; the Stool  
He sat on, or the Door he entered through :  
He has not thanked them, overbearing fool !  
What is he coming to ?

But you should listen to the talk of these.  
Honest they are, and patient they have kept,  
Served him without his *Thank you* or his *Please* . . .  
I often heard  
The gentle Bed, a sigh between each word,  
Murmuring, before I slept.  
The Candle, as I blew it, cried aloud,  
Then bowed,  
And in a smoky argument  
Into the darkness went.

The Kettle puffed a tentacle of breath :—  
‘ Pooh ! I have boiled his water, I don’t know  
Why ; and he always says I boil too slow.  
He never calls me “ Sukie, dear,” and oh,  
I wonder why I squander my desire  
Sitting submissive on his kitchen fire.’

Now the old Copper Basin suddenly  
Rattled and tumbled from the shelf,  
Bumping and crying : ' I can fall by myself ;  
Without a woman's hand  
To patronize and coax and flatter me,  
I understand  
The lean and poise of gravitable land.'  
It gave a raucous and tumultuous shout,  
Twisted itself convulsively about,  
Rested upon the floor, and, while I stare,  
It stares and grins at me.

The old impetuous Gas above my head  
Begins irascibly to flare and fret,  
Wheezing into its epileptic jet,  
Reminding me I ought to go to bed.

The Rafters creak ; an Empty-Cupboard door  
Swings open ; now a wild Plank of the floor  
Breaks from its joist, and leaps behind my foot.  
Down from the chimney half a pound of Soot  
Tumbles, and lies, and shakes itself again.  
The Putty cracks against the window-pane.  
A piece of Paper in the basket shoves  
Another piece, and toward the bottom moves.  
My independent Pencil, while I write,  
Breaks at the point : the ruminating Clock  
Stirs all its body and begins to rock,  
Warning the waiting presence of the Night,  
Strikes the dead hour, and tumbles to the plain  
Ticking of ordinary work again.

You do well to remind me, and I praise  
Your strangely individual foreign ways.  
You call me from myself to recognize  
Companionship in your unselfish eyes.

Harold  
Monro

Harold  
Monro

I want your dear acquaintances, although  
I pass you arrogantly over, throw  
Your lovely sounds, and squander them along  
My busy days. I'll do you no more wrong.

Purr for me, Sukie, like a faithful cat.  
You, my well trampled Boots, and you, my Hat,  
Remain my friends : I feel, though I don't speak,  
Your touch grow kindlier from week to week.  
It well becomes our mutual happiness  
To go toward the same end more or less.  
There is not much dissimilarity,  
Not much to choose, I know it well, in fine,  
Between the purposes of you and me,  
And your eventual Rubbish Heap, and mine.

## SOLITUDE

Harold  
Monro

When you have tidied all things for the night,  
And while your thoughts are fading to their sleep,  
You'll pause a moment in the late firelight,  
Too sorrowful to weep.

The large and gentle furniture has stood  
In sympathetic silence all the day  
With that old kindness of domestic wood ;  
Nevertheless the haunted room will say :  
' Some one must be away.'

The little dog rolls over half awake,  
Stretches his paws, yawns, looking up at you,  
Wags his tail very slightly for your sake,  
That you may feel he is unhappy too.

| A distant engine whistles, or the floor  
Creaks, or the wandering night-wind bangs a door.

Silence is scattered like a broken glass. 1  
The minutes prick their ears and run about 2.  
Then one by one subside again and pass  
Sedately in, monotonously out.

You bend your head and wipe away a tear.  
Solitude walks one heavy step more near.

I

The train ! The twelve o'clock for paradise.  
Hurry, or it will try to creep away.  
Out in the country every one is wise :  
We can be only wise on Saturday.  
There you are waiting, little friendly house :  
Those are your chimney-stacks with you be-  
tween,  
Surrounded by old trees and strolling cows,  
Staring through all your windows at the green.  
Your homely floor is creaking for our tread ;  
The smiling tea-pot with contented spout  
Thinks of the boiling water, and the bread  
Longs for the butter. All their hands are out  
To greet us, and the gentle blankets seem  
Purring and crooning : 'Lie in us, and dream.'

II

The key will stammer, and the door reply,  
The hall wake, yawn, and smile ; the torpid stair  
Will grumble at our feet, the table cry :  
' Fetch my belongings for me ; I am bare.'  
A clatter ! Something in the attic falls.  
A ghost has lifted up his robes and fled.  
The loitering shadows move along the walls ;  
Then silence very slowly lifts his head.  
The starling with impatient screech has flown  
The chimney, and is watching from the tree.  
They thought us gone for ever : mouse alone  
Stops in the middle of the floor to see.  
Now all you idle things, resume your toil.  
Hearth, put your flames on. Sulky kettle, boil.

Contented evening ; comfortable joys ;

The snoozing fire, and all the fields are still :  
Tranquil delight, no purpose, and no noise—

Unless the slow wind flowing round the hill.  
'Murry' (the kettle) dozes ; little mouse

Is rambling prudently about the floor.

There's lovely conversation in this house :

Words become princes that were slaves before.  
What a sweet atmosphere for you and me

The people that have been here left behind. . . .  
Oh, but I fear it may turn out to be

Built of a dream, erected in the mind :

So if we speak too loud, we may awaken  
To find it vanished, and ourselves mistaken.

Lift up the curtain carefully. All the trees

Stand in the dark like drowsy sentinels.

The oak is talkative to-night ; he tells

The little bushes crowding at his knees

That formidable, hard, voluminous

History of growth from acorn into age.

They titter like school-children ; they arouse

Their comrades, who exclaim : 'He is very sage.'

Look how the moon is staring through that cloud,

Laying and lifting idle streaks of light.

O hark ! was that the monstrous wind, so loud

And sudden, prowling always through the night ?

Let down the shaking curtain. They are  
queer,

Those foreigners. They and we live so  
near.

▼

Come, come to bed. The shadows move about,  
And some one seems to overhear our talk.  
The fire is low ; the candles flicker out ;  
The ghosts of former tenants want to walk.  
Already they are shuffling through the gloom.  
I felt an old man touch my shoulder-blade ;  
Once he was married here ; they love this room,  
He and his woman and the child they made.  
Dead, dead, they are, yet some familiar sound,  
Creeping along the brink of happy life,  
Revives their memory from under ground—  
The farmer and his troublesome old wife.  
Let us be going : as we climb the stairs,  
They'll sit down in our warm half-empty  
chairs.

Morning ! Wake up ! Awaken ! All the boughs  
Are rippling on the air across the green.  
The youngest birds are singing to the house.  
Blood of the world !—and is the country clean ?  
Disturb the precinct. Cool it with a shout.  
Sing as you trundle down to light the fire.  
Turn the encumbering shadows tumbling out,  
And fill the chambers with a new desire.  
Life is no good, unless the morning brings  
White happiness and quick delight of day.  
These half-inanimate domestic things  
Must all be useful, or must go away.  
Coffee, be fragrant. Porridge in my plate,  
Increase the vigour to fulfil my fate.

The fresh air moves like water round a boat.

The white clouds wander. Let us wander too.  
The whining, wavering plover flap and float.

That crow is flying after that cuckoo.

Look ! Look ! . . . They're gone. What are the  
great trees calling ?

Just come a little farther, by that edge  
Of green, to where the stormy ploughland, falling  
Wave upon wave, is lapping to the hedge.

Oh, what a lovely bank ! Give me your hand.

Lie down and press your heart against the  
ground.

Let us both listen till we understand,

Each through the other, every natural sound. . . .

I can't hear anything to-day, can you,

But, far and near : 'Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !  
Cuckoo !' ?

The everlasting grass—how bright, how cool !

The day has gone too suddenly, too soon.

There's something white and shiny in that pool—

Throw in a stone, and you will hit the moon.

Listen, the church-bell ringing ! Do not say

We must go back to-morrow to our work.

We'll tell them we are dead : we died to-day.

We're lazy. We're too happy. We will shirk.

We're cows. We're kettles. We'll be anything

Except the manikins of time and fear.

We'll start away to-morrow wandering,

And nobody will notice in a year. . . .

Now the great sun is slipping under ground.

Grip firmly!—How the earth is whirling round !

Be staid ; be careful ; and be not too free.  
Temptation to enjoy your liberty  
May rise against you, break into a crime,  
And smash the habit of employing Time.  
It serves no purpose that the careful clock  
    Mark the appointment, the officious train  
Hurry to keep it, if the minutes mock  
    Loud in your ear: 'Late. Late. Late. Late  
    again.'

Week-end is very well on Saturday :  
    On Monday it's a different affair—  
A little episode, a trivial stay  
    In some oblivious spot somehow, somewhere.  
    On Sunday night we hardly laugh or speak:  
    Week-end begins to merge itself in Week.

Pack up the house, and close the creaking door.  
The fields are dull this morning in the rain.  
It's difficult to leave that homely floor.  
    Wave a light hand ; we will return again.  
(What was that bird ?) Good-bye, ecstatic tree,  
    Floating, bursting, and breathing on the air.  
The lonely farm is wondering that we  
    Can leave. How every window seems to stare !  
That bag is heavy. Share it for a bit.  
    You like that gentle swashing of the ground  
As we tread ? . . .

It is over. Now we sit  
    Reading the morning paper in the sound  
    Of the debilitating heavy train.  
    London again, again. London again.

## THE BIRD AT DAWN

Harold  
Monro

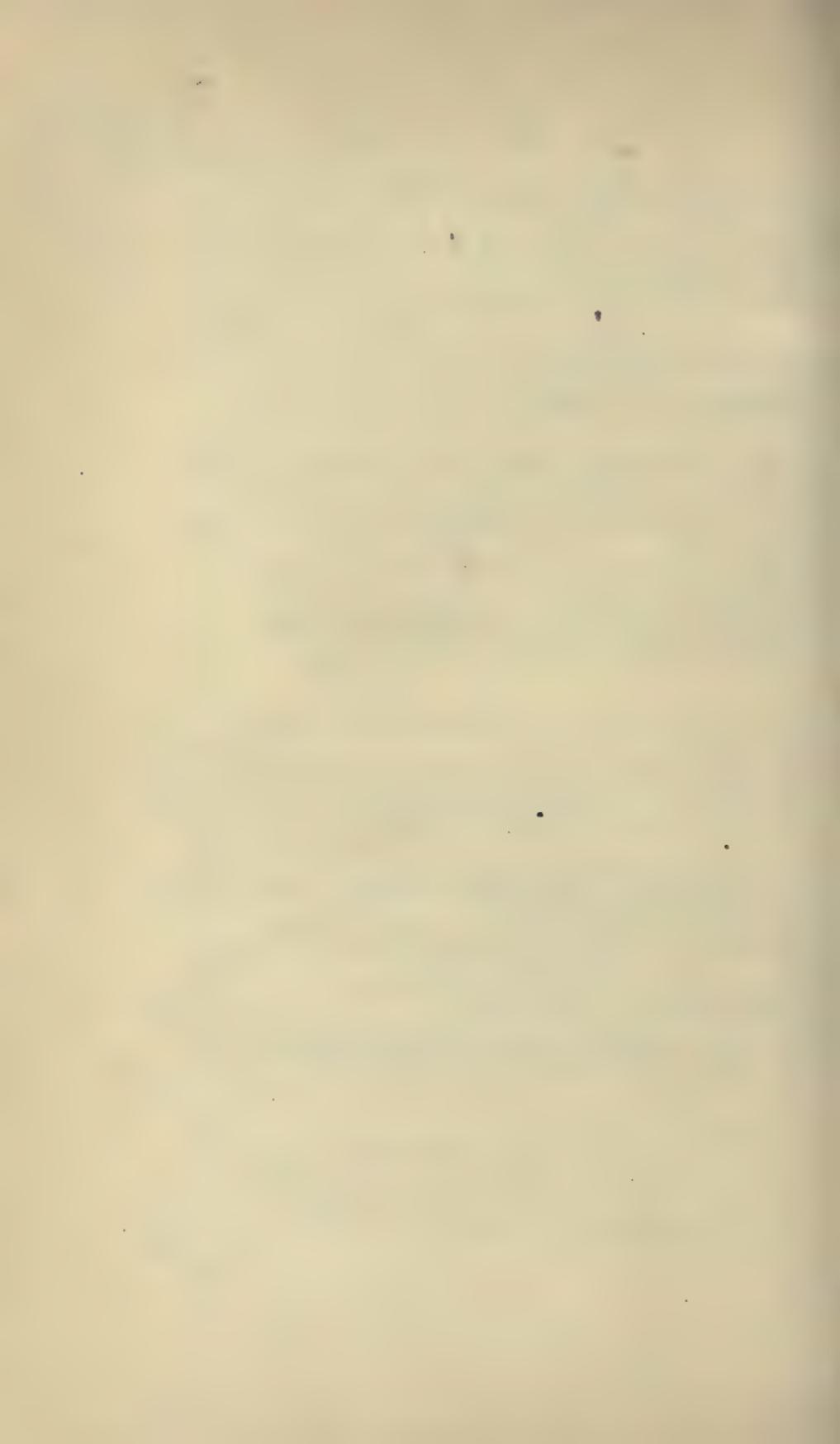
What I saw was just one eye  
In the dawn as I was going : .  
A bird can carry all the sky  
In that little button glowing.

Never in my life I went  
So deep into the firmament.

He was standing on a tree,  
All in blossom overflowing ;  
And he purposely looked hard at me,  
At first, as if to question merrily :  
' Where are you going ? '  
But next some far more serious thing to say :  
I could not answer, could not look away.

Oh, that hard, round, and so distracting eye :  
Little mirror of all sky !—  
And then the after-song another tree  
Held, and sent radiating back on me.

If no man had invented human word,  
And a bird-song had been  
The only way to utter what we mean,  
What would we men have heard,  
What understood, what seen,  
Between the trills and pauses, in between  
The singing and the silence of a bird ?



JOHN MASEFIELD



Here in the self is all that man can know  
 Of Beauty, all the wonder, all the power,  
 All the unearthly colour, all the glow,  
 Here in the self which withers like a flower ;  
 Here in the self which fades as hours pass,  
 And droops and dies and rots and is forgotten  
 Sooner, by ages, than the mirroring glass  
 In which it sees its glory still unrotten.  
 Here in the flesh, within the flesh, behind,  
 Swift in the blood and throbbing on the bone,  
 Beauty herself, the universal mind,  
 Eternal April wandering alone ;  
 The God, the holy Ghost, the atoning Lord,  
 Here in the flesh, the never yet explored.

What am I, Life ? A thing of watery salt  
 Held in cohesion by unresting cells  
 Which work they know not why, which never halt,  
 Myself unwitting where their master dwells.  
 I do not bid them, yet they toil, they spin ;  
 A world which uses me as I use them,  
 Nor do I know which end or which begin,  
 Nor which to praise, which pamper, which con-  
 demn.  
 So, like a marvel in a marvel set,  
 I answer to the vast, as wave by wave  
 The sea of air goes over, dry or wet,  
 Or the full moon comes swimming from her cave,  
 Or the great sun comes north, this myriad I  
 Tingles, not knowing how, yet wondering why.

If I could get within this changing I,  
This ever altering thing which yet persists,  
Keeping the features it is reckoned by,  
While each component atom breaks or twists ;  
If, wandering past strange groups of shifting forms ,  
Cells at their hidden marvels hard at work,  
Pale from much toil, or red from sudden storms ,  
I might attain to where the Rulers lurk ;  
If, pressing past the guards in those grey gates,  
The brain's most folded, intertwisted shell,  
I might attain to that which alters fates,  
The King, the supreme self, the Master Cell ;  
Then, on Man's earthly peak, I might behold  
The unearthly self beyond, unguessed, untold.

Ah, we are neither heaven nor earth, but men ;  
Something that uses and despises both,  
That takes its earth's contentment in the pen,  
Then sees the world's injustice and is wroth,  
And flinging off youth's happy promise, flies  
Up to some breach, despising earthly things,  
And, in contempt of hell and heaven, dies  
Rather than bear some yoke of priests or kings.  
Our joys are not of heaven nor earth, but man's,  
A woman's beauty, or a child's delight,  
The trembling blood when the discoverer scans  
The sought-for world, the guessed-at satellite ;  
The ringing scene, the stone at point to blush  
For unborn men to look at and say ' Hush.'

Roses are beauty, but I never see  
 Those blood drops from the burning heart of June  
 Glowing like thought upon the living tree  
 Without a pity that they die so soon,  
 Die into petals, like those roses old,  
 Those women, who were summer in men's hearts  
 Before the smile upon the Sphinx was cold  
 Or sand had hid the Syrian and his arts.  
 O myriad dust of beauty that lies thick  
 Under our feet that not a single grain  
 But stirred and moved in beauty and was quick  
 For one brief moon and died nor lived again ;  
 But when the moon rose lay upon the grass  
 Pasture to living beauty, life that was.

I went into the fields, but you were there  
 Waiting for me, so all the summer flowers  
 Were only glimpses of your starry powers ;  
 Beautiful and inspired dust they were.

I went down by the waters, and a bird  
 Sang with your voice in all the unknown tones  
 Of all that self of you I have not heard,  
 So that my being felt you to the bones.

I went into the house, and shut the door  
 To be alone, but you were there with me ;  
 All beauty in a little room may be,  
 Though the roof lean and muddy be the floor.

John  
Masefield

Then in my bed I bound my tired eyes  
To make a darkness for my weary brain ;  
But like a presence you were there again,  
Being and real, beautiful and wise,

So that I could not sleep, and cried aloud,  
' You strange grave thing, what is it you would  
say ? '

The redness of your dear lips dimmed to grey,  
The waters ebbed, the moon hid in a cloud.

VII

Death lies in wait for you, you wild thing in the  
wood,  
Shy-footed beauty dear, half-seen, half-under-  
stood,  
Glimpsed in the beech-wood dim and in the drop-  
ping fir,  
Shy like a fawn and sweet and beauty's minister.  
Glimpsed as in flying clouds by night the little  
moon,  
A wonder, a delight, a paleness passing soon.

Only a moment held, only an hour seen,  
Only an instant known in all that life has been,  
One instant in the sand to drink that gush of grace,  
The beauty of your way, the marvel of your face.

Death lies in wait for you, but few short hours he  
gives ;  
I perish even as you by whom all spirit lives.  
Come to me, spirit, come, and fill my hour of  
breath  
With hours of life in life that pay no toll to death.

RALPH HODGSON



## THE GIPSY GIRL

Ralph  
Hodgson

‘ Come, try your skill, kind gentlemen,  
A penny for three tries !’  
Some threw and lost, some threw and won  
A ten-a-penny prize.

She was a tawny gipsy girl,  
A girl of twenty years,  
I liked her for the lumps of gold  
That jingled from her ears ;

I liked the flaring yellow scarf  
Bound loose about her throat,  
I liked her showy purple gown  
And flashy velvet coat.

A man came up, too loose of tongue,  
And said no good to her ;  
She did not blush as Saxons do,  
Or turn upon the cur ;

She fawned and whined ‘ Sweet gentleman,  
A penny for three tries !’  
—But oh, the den of wild things in  
The darkness of her eyes !

## THE BELLS OF HEAVEN

'Twould ring the bells of Heaven  
The wildest peal for years,  
If Parson lost his senses  
And people came to theirs,  
And he and they together  
Knelt down with angry prayers  
For tamed and shabby tigers  
And dancing dogs and bears,  
And wretched, blind pit ponies,  
And little hunted hares.

## BABYLON

Ralph  
Hodgson

If you could bring her glories back !  
You gentle sirs who sift the dust  
And burrow in the mould and must  
Of Babylon for bric-a-brac ;  
Who catalogue and pigeon-hole  
The faded splendours of her soul  
And put her greatness under glass—  
If you could bring her past to pass !

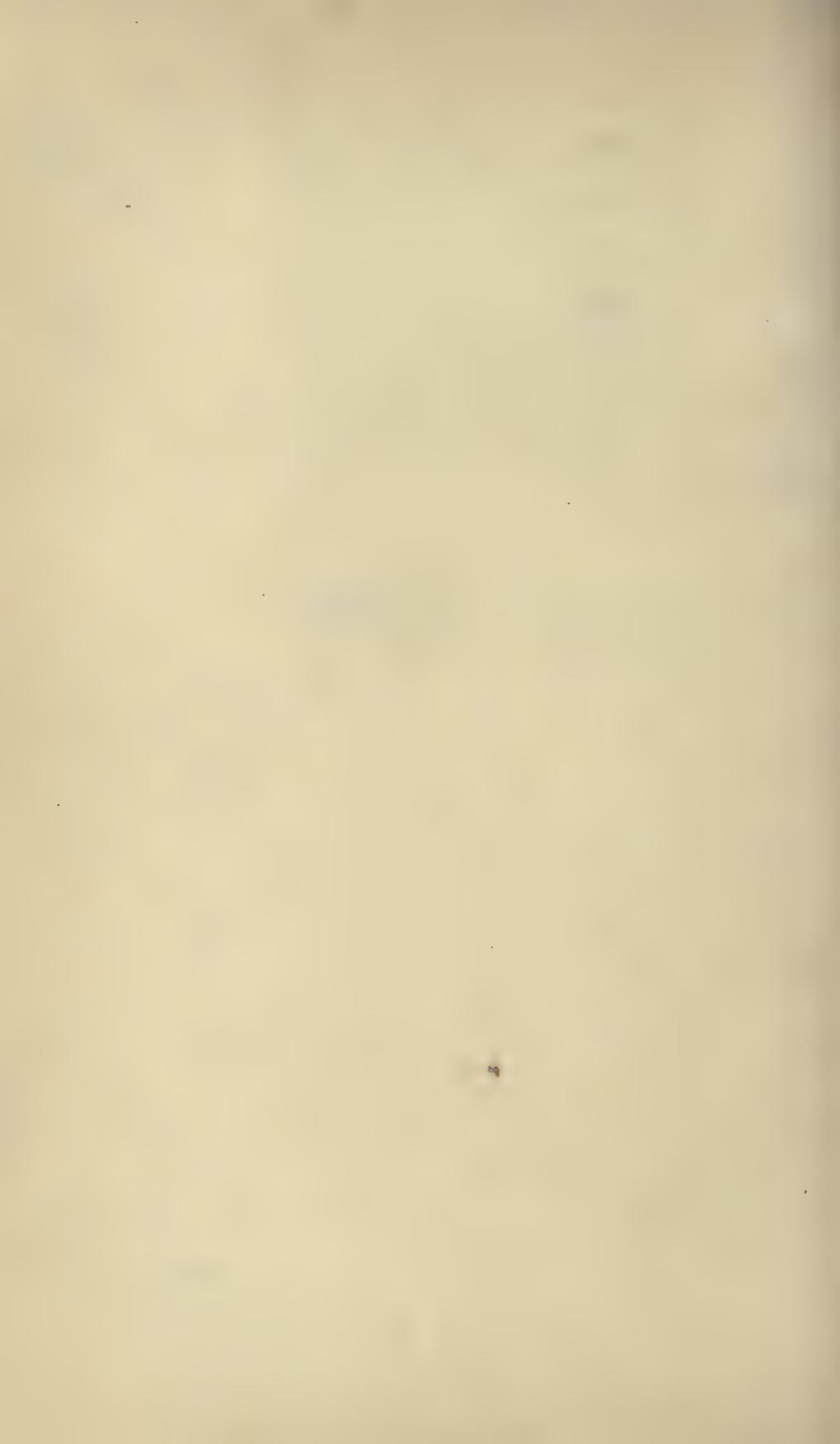
If you could bring her dead to life !  
The soldier lad ; the market wife ;  
Madam buying fowls from her ;  
Tip, the butcher's bandy cur ;  
Workmen carting bricks and clay ;  
Babel passing to and fro  
On the business of a day  
Gone three thousand years ago—  
That you cannot ; then be done,  
Put the goblet down again,  
Let the broken arch remain,  
Leave the dead men's dust alone—

Is it nothing how she lies,  
This old mother of you all,  
You great cities proud and tall  
Towering to a hundred skies  
Round a world she never knew,  
Is it nothing, this, to you ?  
Must the ghoulish work go on  
Till her very floors are gone ?  
While there's still a brick to save  
Drive these people from her grave.

Ralph  
Hodgson

The Jewish seer when he cried  
Woe to Babel's lust and pride  
Saw the foxes at her gates ;  
Once again the wild thing waits.  
Then leave her in her last decay  
A house of owls, a foxes' den ;  
The desert that till yesterday  
Hid her from the eyes of men  
In its proper time and way  
Will take her to itself again.

ROBERT GRAVES



## IT'S A QUEER TIME

Robert  
Graves

It's hard to know if you're alive or dead  
When steel and fire go roaring through your head.

One moment you'll be crouching at your gun  
Traversing, mowing heaps down half in fun :  
The next, you choke and clutch at your right  
breast—

No time to think—leave all—and off you go . . .  
To Treasure Island where the Spice winds blow,  
To lovely groves of mango, quince and lime—  
Breathe no good-bye, but ho, for the Red West !

It's a queer time.

You're charging madly at them yelling 'Fag !'  
When somehow something gives and your feet  
drag.

You fall and strike your head ; yet feel no pain  
And find . . . you're digging tunnels through the  
hay

In the Big Barn, 'cause it's a rainy day.  
Oh springy hay, and lovely beams to climb !  
You're back in the old sailor suit again.

It's a queer time.

Or you'll be dozing safe in your dug-out—  
A great roar—the trench shakes and falls about—  
You're struggling, gasping, struggling, then . . .  
hullo !

Elsie comes tripping gaily down the trench,  
Hanky to nose—that lyddite makes a stench—  
Getting her pinafore all over grime.  
Funny ! because she died ten years ago !

It's a queer time.

Robert  
Graves

The trouble is, things happen much too quick ;  
Up jump the Bosches, rifles thump and click,  
You stagger, and the whole scene fades away :  
Even good Christians don't like passing straight  
From Tipperary or their Hymn of Hate  
To Alleluiah-chanting, and the chime  
Of golden harps . . . and . . . I'm not well to-  
day . . .  
It's a queer time.

## GOLIATH AND DAVID

Robert  
Graves

(*For D. C. T., killed at Fricourt, March 1916*)

Once an earlier David took  
Smooth pebbles from the brook :  
Out between the lines he went  
To that one-sided tournament,  
A shepherd boy who stood out fine  
And young to fight a Philistine  
Clad all in brazen mail. He swears  
That he's killed lions, he's killed bears,  
And those that scorn the God of Zion  
Shall perish so like bear or lion.  
But . . . the historian of that fight  
Had not the heart to tell it right.

Striding within javelin range  
Goliath marvels at this strange  
Goodly-faced boy so proud of strength.  
David's clear eye measures the length ;  
With hand thrust back, he cramps one knee,  
Poises a moment thoughtfully,  
And hurls with a long vengeful swing.  
The pebble, humming from the sling  
Like a wild bee, flies a sure line  
For the forehead of the Philistine ;  
Then . . . but there comes a brazen clink,  
And quicker than a man can think  
Goliath's shield parries each cast.  
Clang ! clang ! and clang ! was David's last,  
Scorn blazes in the Giant's eye,  
Towering unhurt six cubits high.  
Says foolish David, ' Damn your shield !  
And damn my sling ! but I'll not yield.'

He takes his staff of Mamre oak,  
A knotted shepherd-staff that's broke  
The skull of many a wolf and fox  
Come filching lambs from Jesse's flocks.  
Loud laughs Goliath, and that laugh  
Can scatter chariots like blown chaff  
To rout : but David, calm and brave,  
Holds his ground, for God will save.  
Steel crosses wood, a flash, and oh !  
Shame for Beauty's overthrow !  
(God's eyes are dim, His ears are shut.)  
One cruel backhand sabre cut—  
‘ I'm hit ! I'm killed ! ’ young David cries,  
Throws blindly forward, chokes . . . and dies.  
And look, spike-helmeted, grey, grim,  
Goliath straddles over him.

## A PINCH OF SALT

Robert  
Graves

When a dream is born in you  
With a sudden clamorous pain,  
When you know the dream is true  
And lovely, with no flaw nor stain,  
O then, be careful, or with sudden clutch  
You'll hurt the delicate thing you prize so much.

Dreams are like a bird that mocks,  
Flirting the feathers of his tail.  
When you seize at the salt-box  
Over the hedge you'll see him sail.  
Old birds are neither caught with salt nor chaff :  
They watch you from the apple bough and laugh.

Poet, never chase the dream.  
Laugh yourself and turn away.  
Mask your hunger, let it seem  
Small matter if he come or stay ;  
But when he nestles in your hand at last,  
Close up your fingers tight and hold him fast.

STAR-TALK

‘Are you awake, Gemelli,  
This frosty night?’

‘We’ll be awake till reveillé,  
Which is Sunrise,’ say the Gemelli,  
‘It’s no good trying to go to sleep :  
If there’s wine to be got we’ll drink it deep,  
But rest is hopeless to-night,  
But rest is hopeless to-night.’

‘Are you cold too, poor Pleiads,  
This frosty night?’

‘Yes, and so are the Hyads :  
See us cuddle and hug,’ say the Pleiads,  
‘All six in a ring : it keeps us warm :  
We huddle together like birds in a storm :  
It’s bitter weather to-night,  
It’s bitter weather to-night.’

‘What do you hunt, Orion,  
This starry night?’

‘The Ram, the Bull and the Lion,  
And the Great Bear,’ says Orion,  
‘With my starry quiver and beautiful belt  
I am trying to find a good thick pelt  
To warm my shoulders to-night,  
To warm my shoulders to-night.’

‘Did you hear that, Great She-bear,  
This frosty night?’

‘Yes, he’s talking of stripping *me* bare  
Of my own big fur,’ says the She-bear,  
I’m afraid of the man and his terrible arrow :  
The thought of it chills my bones to the marrow,  
And the frost so cruel to-night !  
And the frost so cruel to-night !

‘How is your trade, Aquarius,  
This frosty night?’  
‘Complaints is many and various  
And my feet are cold,’ says Aquarius,  
‘There’s Venus objects to Dolphin-scales,  
And Mars to Crab-spawn found in my pails,  
And the pump has frozen to-night,  
And the pump has frozen to-night.’

Robert  
Graves

## IN THE WILDERNESS

Christ of his gentleness  
Thirsting and hungering,  
Walked in the wilderness ;  
Soft words of grace he spoke  
Unto lost desert-folk  
That listened wondering.  
He heard the bitterns call  
From ruined palace-wall,  
Answered them brotherly.  
He held communion  
With the she-pelican  
Of lonely piety.  
Basilisk, cockatrice,  
Flocked to his homilies,  
With mail of dread device,  
With monstrous barbèd stings,  
With eager dragon-eyes ;  
Great rats on leather wings  
And poor blind broken things,  
Foul in their miseries.  
And ever with him went,  
Of all his wanderings  
Comrade, with ragged coat,  
Gaunt ribs—poor innocent—  
Bleeding foot, burning throat,  
The guileless old scape-goat ;  
For forty nights and days  
Followed in Jesus' ways,  
Sure guard behind him kept,  
Tears like a lover wept.

## THE BOY IN CHURCH

Robert  
Graves

‘Gabble-gabble . . . brethren . . . gabble-gabble!’

My window glimpses larch and heather.

I hardly hear the tuneful babble,

Not knowing nor much caring whether

The text is praise or exhortation,

Prayer or thanksgiving or damnation.

Outside it blows wetter and wetter,

The tossing trees never stay still;

I shift my elbows to catch better

The full round sweep of heathered hill.

The tortured copse bends to and fro

In silence like a shadow-show.

The parson’s voice runs like a river

Over smooth rocks. I like this church.

The pews are staid, they never shiver,

They never bend or sway or lurch.

‘Prayer,’ says the kind voice, ‘is a chain

That draws down Grace from Heaven again.’

I add the hymns up over and over

Until there’s not the least mistake.

Seven-seventy-one. (Look! there’s a plover!

It’s gone!) Who’s that Saint by the Lake?

The red light from his mantle passes

Across the broad memorial brasses.

Robert  
Graves

It's pleasant here for dreams and thinking,  
Lolling and letting reason nod,  
With ugly, serious people linking  
Prayer-chains for a forgiving God. /  
But a dumb blast sets the trees swaying  
With furious zeal like madmen praying.

THE LADY VISITOR IN THE PAUPER  
WARD

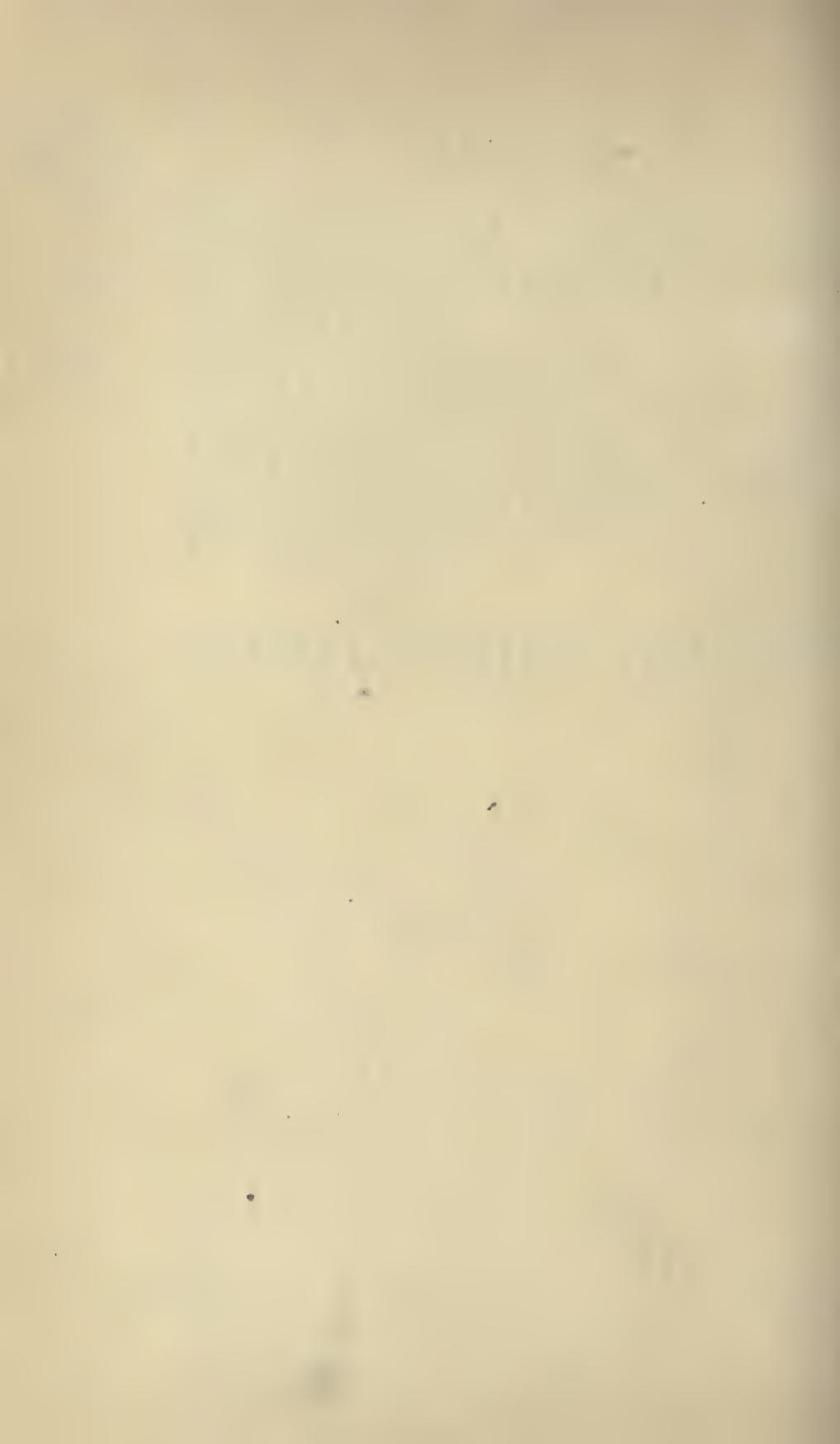
Robert  
Graves

Why do you break upon this old, cool peace,  
This painted peace of ours,  
With harsh dress hissing like a flock of geese,  
With garish flowers ?  
Why do you churn smooth waters rough again,  
Selfish old Skin-and-bone ?  
Leave us to quiet dreaming and slow pain,  
Leave us alone.

NOT DEAD

Walking through trees to cool my heat and pain,  
I know that David's with me here again.  
All that is simple, happy, strong, he is.  
Caressingly I stroke  
Rough bark of the friendly oak.  
A brook goes bubbling by : the voice is his.  
Turf burns with pleasant smoke :  
I laugh at chaffinch and at primroses.  
All that is simple, happy, strong, he is.  
Over the whole wood in a little while  
Breaks his slow smile.

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON



## RUPERT BROOKE

Wilfrid  
Wilson  
Gibson

Your face was lifted to the golden sky  
Ablaze beyond the black roofs of the square,  
As flame on flame leapt, flourishing in air  
Its tumult of red stars exultantly,  
To the cold constellations dim and high ;  
And as we neared, the roaring ruddy flare  
Kindled to gold your throat and brow and hair  
Until you burned, a flame of ecstasy.

The golden head goes down into the night  
Quenched in cold gloom—and yet again you stand  
Beside me now with lifted face alight,  
As, flame to flame, and fire to fire you burn . . .  
Then, recollecting, laughingly you turn,  
And look into my eyes and take my hand.

## TENANTS

Suddenly, out of dark and leafy ways,  
We came upon the little house asleep  
In cold blind stillness, shadowless and deep,  
In the white magic of the full moon-blaze.  
Strangers without the gate, we stood agaze,  
Fearful to break that quiet, and to creep  
Into the home that had been ours to keep  
Through a long year of happy nights and days.

So unfamiliar in the white moon-gleam,  
So old and ghostly like a house of dream  
It seemed, that over us there stole the dread  
That even as we watched it, side by side,  
The ghosts of lovers, who had lived and died  
Within its walls, were sleeping in our bed.

FOR G.

Wilfrid  
Wilson  
Gibson

All night under the moon

Plovers are flying

Over the dreaming meadows of silvery light,

Over the meadows of June,

Flying and crying—

Wandering voices of love in the hush of the night.

All night under the moon,

Love, though we're lying

Quietly under the thatch, in silvery light

Over the meadows of June

Together we're flying—

Rapturous voices of love in the hush of the night ?

## SEA-CHANGE

Wind-flicked and ruddy her young body glowed  
In sunny shallows, splashing them to spray ;  
But when on rippled, silver sand she lay,  
And over her the little green waves flowed,  
Coldly translucent and moon-coloured showed  
Her frail young beauty, as if rapt away  
From all the light and laughter of the day  
To some twilit, forlorn sea-god's abode.

Again into the sun with happy cry  
She leapt alive and sparkling from the sea,  
Sprinkling white spray against the hot blue sky,  
A laughing girl . . . and yet, I see her lie  
Under a deeper tide eternally  
In cold moon-coloured immortality.

## BATTLE

Wilfrid  
Wilson  
Gibson

I

### THE RETURN

He went, and he was gay to go :  
And I smiled on him as he went.  
My boy ! 'Twas well he couldn't know  
My darkest dread, or what it meant—

Just what it meant to smile and smile  
And let my son go cheerily—  
My son . . . and wondering all the while  
What stranger would come back to me.

II

### THE DANCERS

All day beneath the hurtling shells  
Before my burning eyes  
Hover the dainty demoiselles—  
The peacock dragon-flies.

Unceasingly they dart and glance  
Above the stagnant stream—  
And I am fighting here in France  
As in a senseless dream.

A dream of shattering black shells  
That hurtle overhead,  
And dainty dancing demoiselles  
Above the dreamless dead.

Out of the sparkling sea  
I drew my tingling body clear, and lay  
On a low ledge the livelong summer day,  
    Basking, and watching lazily  
White sails in Falmouth Bay.

My body seemed to burn  
Salt in the sun that drenched it through and through  
Till every particle glowed clean and new  
    And slowly seemed to turn  
To lucent amber in a world of blue. . . .

I felt a sudden wrench—  
A trickle of warm blood—  
And found that I was sprawling in the mud  
Among the dead men in the trench.

## LAMENT

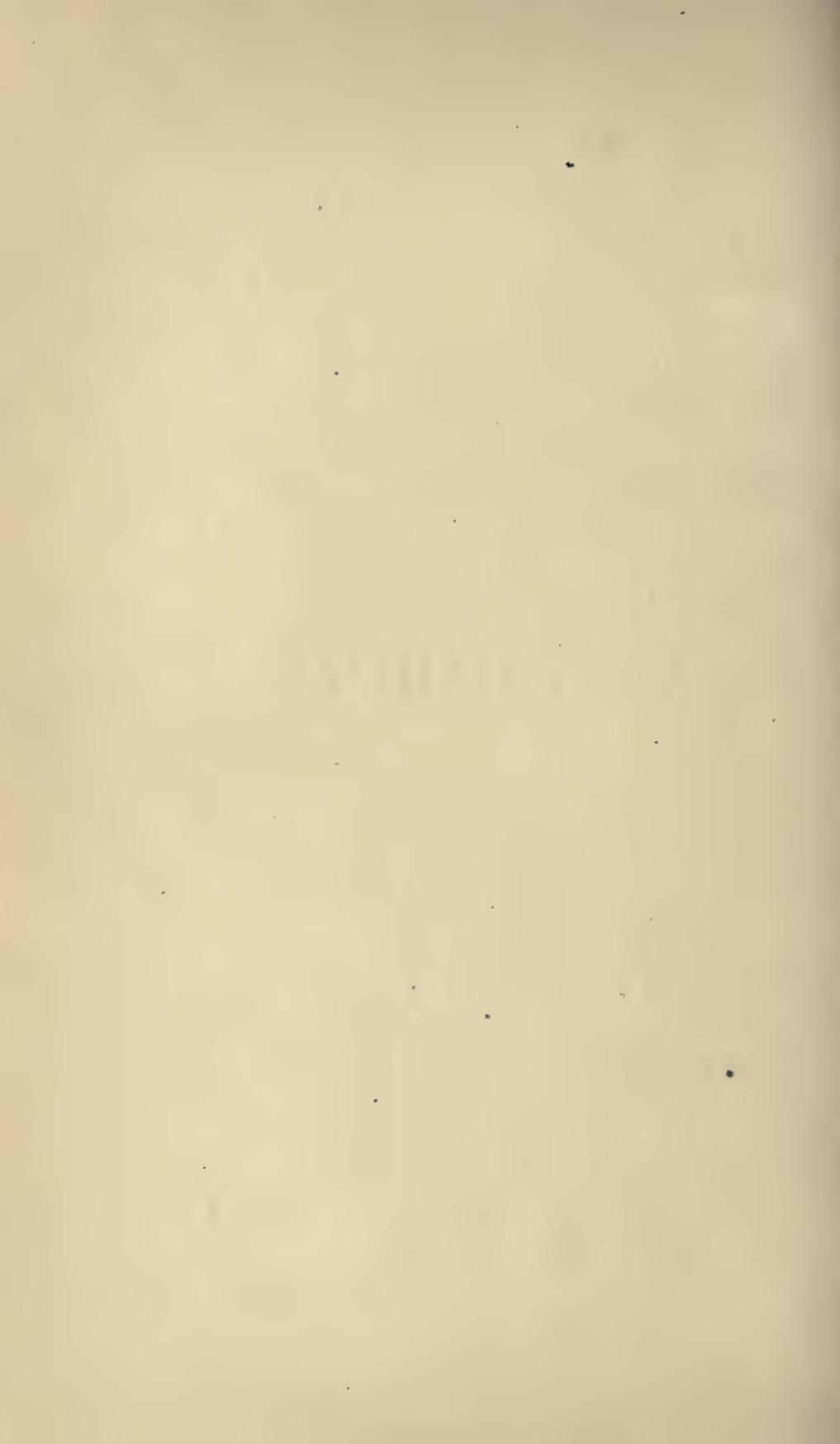
We who are left, how shall we look again  
Happily on the sun or feel the rain  
Without remembering how they who went  
Ungrudgingly and spent  
Their lives for us loved, too, the sun and rain ?

Wilfrid  
Wilson  
Gibson

A bird among the rain-wet lilac sings—  
But we, how shall we turn to little things  
And listen to the birds and winds and streams  
Made holy by their dreams,  
Nor feel the heart-break in the heart of things ?



JOHN FREEMAN



## MUSIC COMES

John  
Freeman

Music comes

Sweetly from the trembling string  
When wizard fingers sweep  
Dreamily, half asleep ;  
When through remembering reeds  
Ancient airs and murmurs creep,  
Oboe oboe following,  
Flute answering clear high flute,  
Voices, voices—falling mute,  
And the jarring drums.

At night I heard

First a waking bird  
Out of the quiet darkness sing . . .

Music comes

Strangely to the brain asleep !

And I heard

Soft, wizard fingers sweep  
Music from the trembling string,  
And through remembering reeds  
Ancient airs and murmurs creep ;

Oboe oboe following,  
Flute calling clear high flute,

Voices faint, falling mute,

And low jarring drums ;

Then all those airs

Sweetly jangled—newly strange,

Rich with change . . .

Was it the wind in the reeds ?

Did the wind range

Over the trembling string ;

John  
Freeman

Into flute and oboe pouring  
Solemn music ; sinking, soaring  
Low to high,  
Up and down the sky ?  
Was it the wind jarring  
Drowsy far-off drums ?

Strangely to the brain asleep  
Music comes.

## NOVEMBER SKIES

John  
Freeman

Than these November skies  
Is no sky lovelier. The clouds are deep ;  
Into their grey the subtle spies  
Of colour creep,  
Changing that high austerity to delight,  
Till ev'n the leaden interfolds are bright.  
And, where the cloud breaks, faint far azure peers  
Ere a thin flushing cloud again  
Shuts up that loveliness, or shares.  
The huge great clouds move slowly, gently, as  
Reluctant the quick sun should shine in vain,  
Holding in bright caprice their rain.  
And when of colours none,  
Not rose, nor amber, nor the scarce late green,  
Is truly seen,—  
In all the myriad grey,  
In silver height and dusky deep, remain  
The loveliest,  
Faint purple flushes of the unvanquished sun.

Beauty walked over the hills and made them bright.  
She in the long fresh grass scattered her rains  
Sparkling and glittering like a host of stars,  
But not like stars cold, severe, terrible.  
Hers was the laughter of the wind that leaped  
Arm-full of shadows, flinging them far and wide.  
Hers the bright light within the quick green  
Of every new leaf on the oldest tree.  
It was her swimming made the river run  
Shining as the sun ;  
Her voice, escaped from winter's chill and dark,  
Singing in the incessant lark. . . .  
All this was hers—yet all this had not been  
Except 'twas seen.  
It was my eyes, Beauty, that made thee bright ;  
My ears that heard, the blood leaping in my veins,  
The vehemence of transfiguring thought—  
Not lights and shadows, birds, grasses and rains—  
That made thy wonders wonderful.  
For it has been, Beauty, that I have seen thee,  
Tedious as a painted cloth at a bad play,  
Empty of meaning and so of all delight.  
Now thou hast blessed me with a great pure bliss,  
Shaking thy rainy light all over the earth,  
And I have paid thee with my thankfulness.

## ‘IT WAS THE LOVELY MOON’

John  
Freeman

It was the lovely moon—she lifted  
Slowly her white brow among  
Bronze cloud-waves that ebbed and drifted  
Faintly, faintlier afar.  
Calm she looked, yet pale with wonder,  
Sweet in unwonted thoughtfulness,  
Watching the earth that dwindled under  
Faintly, faintlier afar.  
It was the lovely moon that lovelike  
Hovered over the wandering, tired  
Earth, her bosom grey and dovelike,  
Hovering beautiful as a dove. . . .  
The lovely moon :—her soft light falling  
Lightly on roof and poplar and pine—  
Tree to tree whispering and calling,  
Wonderful in the silvery shine  
Of the round, lovely, thoughtful moon.

Last night a sword-light in the sky  
Flashed a swift terror on the dark.  
In that sharp light the fields did lie  
Naked and stone-like ; each tree stood  
Like a tranced woman, bound and stark.

Far off the wood  
With darkness ridged the riven dark.

And cows astonished stared with fear,  
And sheep crept to the knees of cows,  
And conies to their burrows slid,  
And rooks were still in rigid boughs,  
And all things else were still or hid.

From all the wood  
Came but the owl's hoot, ghostly, clear.

In that cold trance the earth was held  
It seemed an age, or time was nought.  
Sure never from that stone-like field  
Sprang golden corn, nor from those chill  
Grey granite trees was music wrought.

In all the wood  
Even the tall poplar hung stone still.

It seemed an age, or time was none . . .  
Slowly the earth heaved out of sleep  
And shivered, and the trees of stone  
Bent and sighed in the gusty wind,  
And rain swept as birds flocking sweep.

Far off the wood  
Rolled the slow thunders on the wind.

From all the wood came no brave bird,  
No song broke through the close-fall'n night,  
Nor any sound from cowering herd :  
Only a dog's long lonely howl  
When from the window poured pale light.  
And from the wood  
The hoot came ghostly of the owl.

John  
Freeman

## THE PIGEONS

The pigeons, following the faint warm light,  
Stayed at last on the roof till warmth was gone,  
Then in the mist that's hastier than night  
Disappeared all behind the carved dark stone,  
Huddling from the black cruelty of the frost.  
With the new sparkling sun they swooped and  
came

Like a cloud between the sun and street, and then  
Like a cloud blown from the blue north were lost,  
Vanishing and returning ever again,  
Small cloud following cloud across the flame  
That clear and meagre burned and burned away  
And left the ice unmelted day by day.

. . . Nor could the sun through the roof's purple  
slate

(Though his gold magic played with shadow there  
And drew the pigeons from the streaming air)  
With any fiery magic penetrate.

Under the roof the air and water froze,  
And no smoke from the gaping chimney rose.  
The silver frost upon the window pane  
Flowered and branched each starving night anew,  
And stranger, lovelier and crueler grew ;  
Pouring her silver that cold silver through,  
The moon made all the dim flower bright again.

. . . Pouring her silver through that barren flower  
Of silver frost, until it filled and whitened  
A room where two small children waited, frightened  
At the pale ghost of light that hour by hour  
Stared at them till though fear slept not they slept.  
And when that white ghost from the window crept,

And day came and they woke and saw all plain John  
Though still the frost-flower blinded the window Freeman  
pane,

And touched their mother and touched her hand in  
vain,

And wondered why she woke not when they woke ;  
And wondered what it was their sleep that broke  
When hand in hand they stared and stared, so  
frightened ;

They feared and waited, and waited all day long,  
While all the shadows went and the day bright-  
ened,

All the ill shadows but one shadow strong.

Outside were busy feet and human speech  
And daily cries and horns. Maybe they heard,  
Painfully wondering still, and each to each  
Leaning, and listening if their mother stirred—  
Cold, cold,

Hungering as the long slow hours grew old,  
Though food within the cupboard idle lay  
Beyond their thought, or but beyond their reach.

The soft blue pigeons all the afternoon  
Sunned themselves on the roof or rose at play,  
Then with the shrinking light fluttered away ;  
And once more came the icy-hearted moon,  
Staring down at the frightened children there  
That could but shiver and stare.

How many hours, how many days, who knows ?  
Neighbours there were who thought they had gone  
away

To return some luckier or luckless day.

No sound came from the room : the cold air froze  
The very echo of the childrens' sighs.  
And what they saw within each other's eyes,

John  
Freeman

Or heard each other's heart say as they peered  
At the dead mother lying there, and feared  
That she might wake, and then might never wake,  
Who knows, who knows ?  
None heard a living sound their silence break.

In those cold days and nights how many birds,  
Flittering above the fields and streams all frozen,  
Watched hungrily the tended flocks and herds—  
Earth's chosen nourished by earth's wise self-chosen !

How many birds suddenly stiffened and died  
With no plaint cried,  
The starved heart ceasing when the pale sun ceased !

And when the new day stepped from the same cold  
East

The dead birds lay in the light on the snow-flecked  
field,

Their song and beautiful free winging stilled.

I walked under snow-sprinkled hills at night,  
And starry sprinkled skies deep blue and bright.  
The keen wind thrust with his knife against the  
thin

Breast of the wood as I went tingling by,  
And heard a weak cheep-cheep,—no more—the cry  
Of a bird that crouched the smitten wood with-in . . .

But no one heeded that sharp spiritual cry  
Of the two children in their misery,  
When in the cold and famished night death's shade  
More terrible the moon's cold shadows made.

How was it none could hear  
That bodiless crying, birdlike, sharp and clear ?

I cannot think what they, unanswered, thought John  
When the night came again and shadows moved Freeman  
As the moon through the ice-flower stared and  
roved,

And that unyielding Shadow came again.  
That Shadow came again unseen and caught  
The children as they sat listening in vain,  
Their starved hearts failing ere the Shadow re-  
moved.

And when the new morn stepped from the same  
cold East

They lay unawakening in the barren light,  
Their song and their imaginations bright,  
Their pains and fears and all bewilderment  
ceased. . . .

While the brief sun gave  
New beauty to the death-flower of the frost,  
And pigeons in the frore air swooped and tossed,  
And glad eyes were more glad, and grave less grave.

There is not pity enough in heaven or earth,  
There is not love enough, if children die  
Like famished birds—oh, less mercifully.  
A great wrong's done when such as these go forth  
Into the starless dark, broken and bruised,  
With mind and sweet affection all confused,  
And horror closing round them as they go.  
There is not pity enough !

And I have made, children, these verses for you,  
Lasting a little longer than your breath,  
Because I have been haunted with your death :  
So men are driven to things they hate to do.  
Jesus, forgive us all our happiness,  
As Thou dost blot out all our miseries.

## HAPPY IS ENGLAND NOW

There is not anything more wonderful  
Than a great people moving towards the deep  
Of an unguessed and unfear'd future ; nor  
Is aught so dear of all held dear before  
As the new passion stirring in their veins  
When the destroying Dragon wakes from sleep.

Happy is England now, as never yet !  
And though the sorrows of the slow days fret  
Her faithfulest children, grief itself is proud.  
Ev'n the warm beauty of this spring and summer  
That turns to bitterness turns then to gladness  
Since for this England the beloved ones died.

Happy is England in the brave that die  
For wrongs not hers and wrongs so sternly hers ;  
Happy in those that give, give, and endure  
The pain that never the new years may cure ;  
Happy in all her dark woods, green fields, towns,  
Her hills and rivers and her chafing sea.

What'er was dear before is dearer now.  
There's not a bird singing upon his bough  
But sings the sweeter in our English ears :  
There's not a nobleness of heart, hand, brain  
But shines the purer ; happiest is England now  
In those that fight, and watch with pride and tears.

JOHN DRINKWATER



## MAY GARDEN

John  
Drinkwater

A shower of green gems on my apple tree  
This first morning of May  
Has fallen out of the night, to be  
Herald of holiday—  
Bright gems of green that, fallen there,  
Seem fixed and glowing on the air.

Until a flutter of blackbird wings  
Shakes and makes the boughs alive,  
And the gems are now no frozen things,  
But apple-green buds to thrive  
On sap of my May garden, how well  
The green September globes will tell.

Also my pear tree has its buds,  
But they are silver-yellow,  
Like autumn meadows when the floods  
Are silver under willow,  
And here shall long and shapely pears  
Be gathered while the autumn wears.

And there are sixty daffodils  
Beneath my wall. . . .  
And jealousy it is that kills  
This world when all  
The spring's behaviour here is spent  
To make the world magnificent

Black in the summer night my Cotswold hill  
Aslant my window sleeps, beneath a sky  
Deep as the bedded violets that fill  
March woods with dusky passion. As I lie  
Abed between cool walls I watch the host  
Of the slow stars lit over Gloucester plain,  
And drowsily the habit of these most  
Beloved of English lands moves in my brain,  
While silence holds dominion of the dark,  
Save when the foxes from the spinneys bark.

I see the valleys in their morning mist  
Wreathed under limpid hills in moving light,  
Happy with many a yeoman melodist :  
I see the little roads of twinkling white  
Busy with fieldward teams and market gear  
Of rosy men, cloth-gaitered, who can tell  
The many-minded changes of the year,  
Who know why crops and kine fare ill or well ;  
I see the sun persuade the mist away,  
Till town and stead are shining to the day.]

I see the wagons move along the rows  
Of ripe and summer-breathing clover-flower,  
I see the lissom husbandman who knows  
Deep in his heart the beauty of his power,  
As, lithely pitched, the full-heaped fork bids on  
The harvest home. I hear the rickyard fill  
With gossip as in generations gone,  
While wagon follows wagon from the hill.  
I think how, when our seasons all are sealed,  
Shall come the unchanging harvest from the field.

I see the barns and comely manors planned John  
By men who somehow moved in comely thought, Drinkwater  
Who, with a simple shippon to their hand,  
As men upon some godlike business wrought ;  
I see the little cottages that keep  
Their beauty still where since Plantagenet  
Have come the shepherds happily to sleep,  
Finding the loaves and cups of cider set ;  
I see the twisted shepherds, brown and old,  
Driving at dusk their glimmering sheep to fold.

And now the valleys that upon the sun  
Broke from their opal veils, are veiled again,  
And the last light upon the wolds is done,  
And silence falls on flock and fields and men ;  
And black upon the night I watch my hill,  
And the stars shine, and there an owly wing  
Brushes the night, and all again is still,  
And, from this land of worship that I sing,  
I turn to sleep, content that from my sires  
I draw the blood of England's midmost shires.

## THE COTSWOLD FARMERS

Sometimes the ghosts forgotten go  
Along the hill-top way,  
And with long scythes of silver mow  
Meadows of moonlit hay,  
Until the cocks of Cotswold crow  
The coming of the day.

There's Tony Turkletob who died  
When he could drink no more,  
And Uncle Heritage, the pride  
Of eighteen-twenty-four,  
And Ebenezer Barleytide,  
And others half a score.

They fold in phantom pens, and plough  
Furrows without a share,  
And one will milk a faery cow,  
And one will stare and stare,  
And whistle ghostly tunes that now  
Are not sung anywhere.

The moon goes down on Oakridge lea,  
The other world's astir,  
The Cotswold Farmers silently  
Go back to sepulchre,  
The sleeping watchdogs wake, and see  
No ghostly harvester.

## RECIPROCITY

John  
Drinkwater

I do not think that skies and meadows are  
Moral, or that the fixture of a star  
Comes of a quiet spirit, or that trees  
Have wisdom in their windless silences.  
Yet these are things invested in my mood  
With constancy, and peace, and fortitude,  
That in my troubled season I can cry  
Upon the wide composure of the sky,  
And envy fields, and wish that I might be  
As little daunted as a star or tree.

## BIRTHRIGHT

Lord Rameses of Egypt sighed  
Because a summer evening passed ;  
And little Ariadne cried  
That summer fancy fell at last  
To dust ; and young Verona died  
When beauty's hour was overcast.

Theirs was the bitterness we know  
Because the clouds of hawthorn keep  
So short a state, and kisses go  
To tombs unfathomably deep,  
While Rameses and Romeo  
And little Ariadne sleep.

## OLTON POOLS

John  
Drinkwater

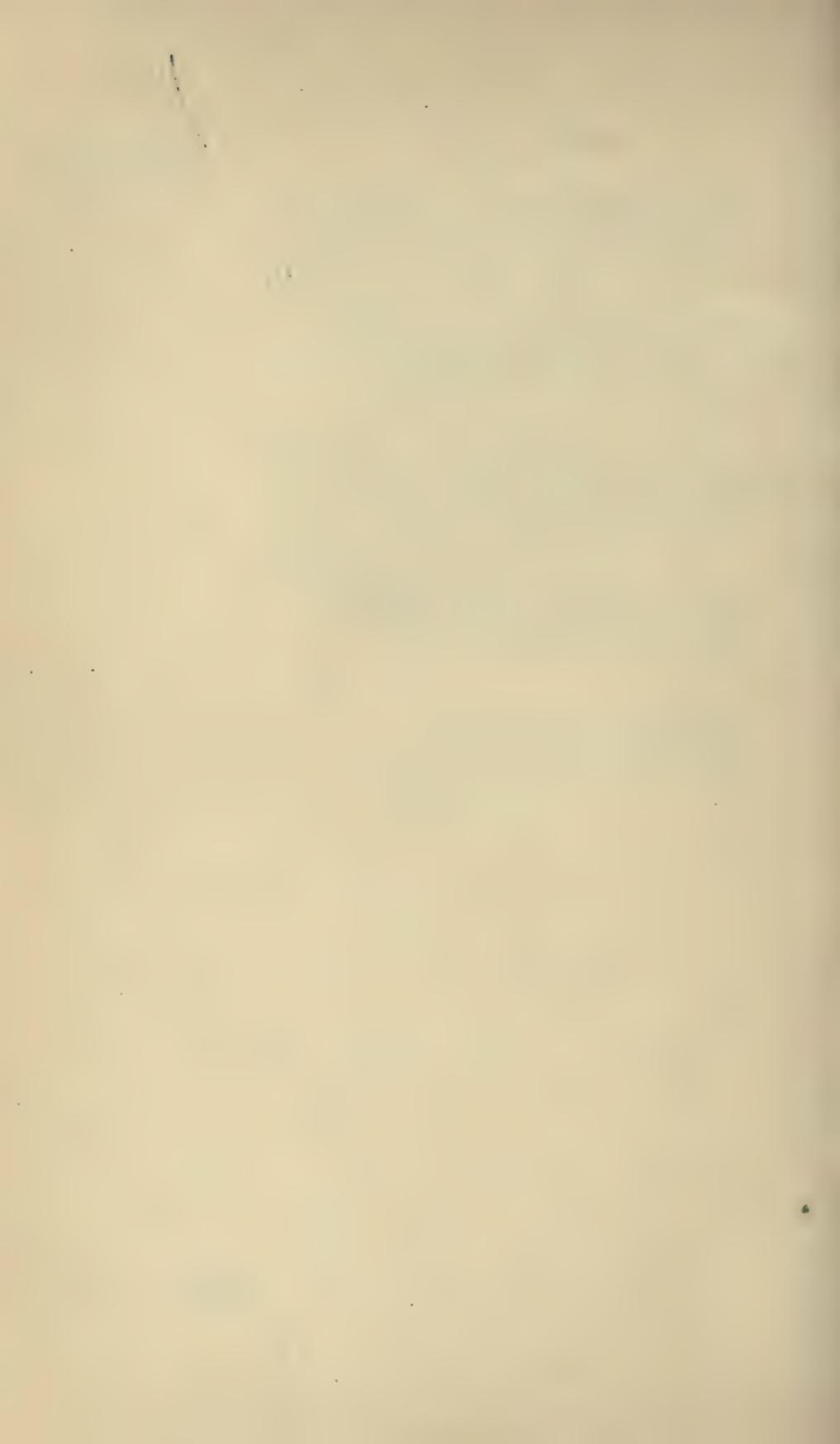
Now June walks on the waters,  
And the cuckoo's last enchantment  
Passes from Olton pools.

Now dawn comes to my window  
Breathing midsummer roses,  
And scythes are wet with dew.

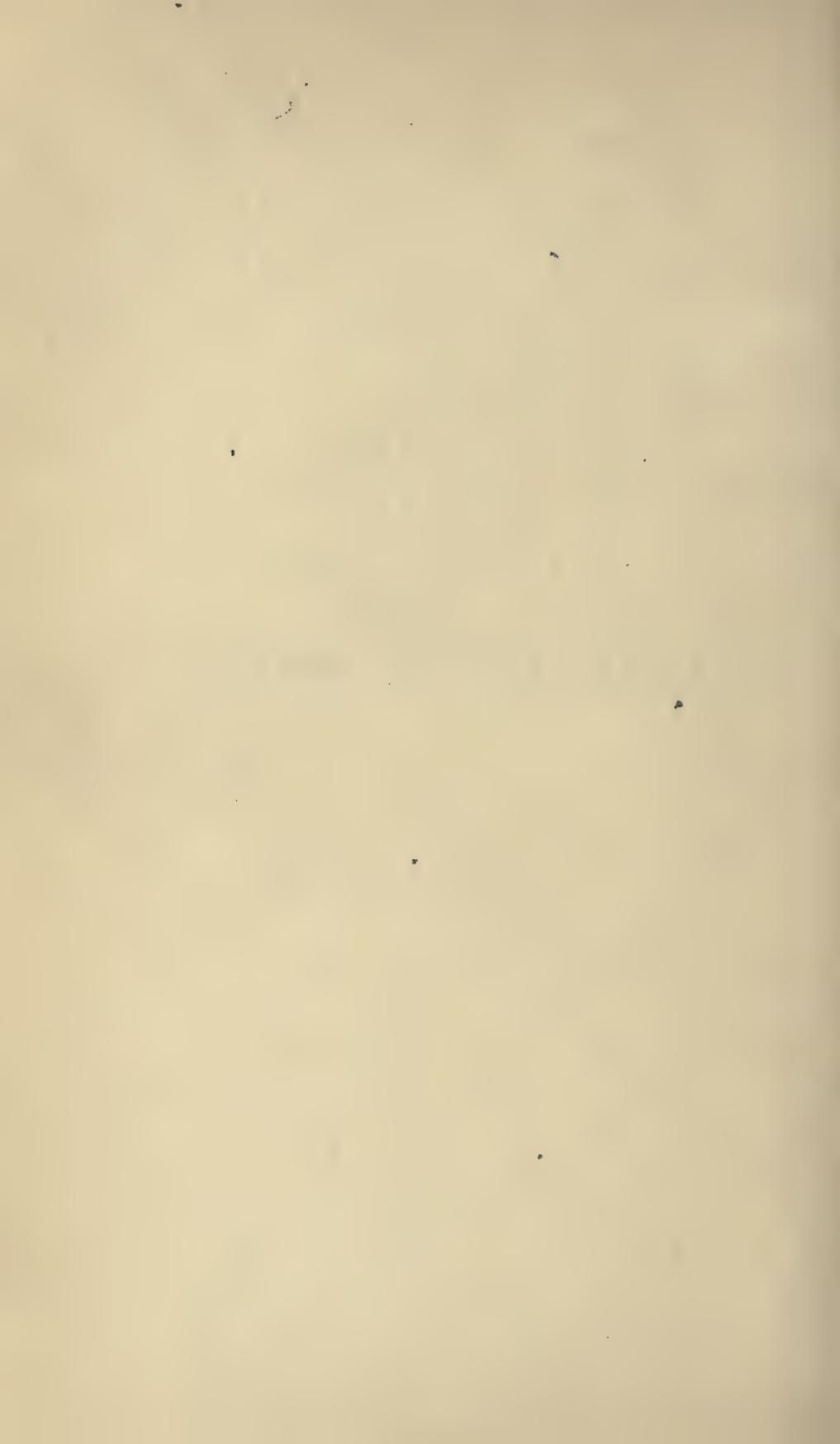
Is it not strange for ever  
That, bowered in this wonder,  
Man keeps a jealous heart? . . .

That June and the June waters,  
And birds and dawn-lit roses,  
Are gospels in the wind,

Fading upon the deserts,  
Poor pilgrim revelations? . . .  
Hist . . . over Olton pools!



# WALTER DE LA MARE



## THE SCRIBE

Walter  
de la  
Mare

What lovely things  
Thy hand hath made,  
The smooth-plumed bird  
In its emerald shade,  
The seed of the grass,  
The speck of stone  
Which the wayfaring ant  
Stirs, and hastes on !

Though I should sit  
By some tarn in Thy hills,  
Using its ink  
As the spirit wills  
To write of Earth's wonders,  
Its live willed things,  
Flit would the ages  
On soundless wings  
Ere unto Z  
My pen drew nigh,  
Leviathan told,  
And the honey-fly :  
And still would remain  
My wit to try—  
My worn reeds broken,  
The dark tarn dry,  
All words forgotten—  
Thou, Lord, and I.

## THE REMONSTRANCE

I was at peace until you came  
And set a careless mind aflame ;  
I lived in quiet ; cold, content ;  
All longing in safe banishment,  
Until your ghostly lips and eyes  
Made wisdom unwise.

Naught was in me to tempt your feet  
To seek a lodging. Quite forgot  
Lay the sweet solitude we two  
In childhood used to wander through ;  
Time's cold had closed my heart about,  
And shut you out.

Well, and what then ? . . . O vision grave,  
Take all the little all I have !  
Strip me of what in voiceless thought  
Life's kept of life, unhoped, unsought !—  
Reverie and dream that memory must  
Hide deep in dust !

This only I say : Though cold and bare  
The haunted house you have chosen to share,  
Still 'neath its walls the moonbeam goes  
And trembles on the untended rose ;  
Still o'er its broken roof-tree rise  
The starry arches of the skies ;  
And 'neath your lightest word shall be  
The thunder of an ebbing sea.

## THE GHOST

Walter  
de la  
Mare

‘Who knocks?’ ‘I, who was beautiful  
Beyond all dreams to restore,  
I from the roots of the dark thorn am hither,  
And knock on the door.’

‘Who speaks?’ ‘I—once was my speech  
Sweet as the bird’s on the air,  
When echo lurks by the waters to heed ;  
’Tis I speak thee fair.’

‘Dark is the hour !’ ‘Aye, and cold.’  
‘Lone is my house.’ ‘Ah, but mine ?’  
‘Sight, touch, lips, eyes gleamed in vain.’  
‘Long dead these to thine.’

Silence. Still faint on the porch  
Brake the flames of the stars.  
In gloom groped a hope-wearied hand  
Over keys, bolts, and bars.

A face peered. All the grey night  
In chaos of vacancy shone ;  
Nought but vast sorrow was there—  
The sweet cheat gone.

## THE FOOL RINGS HIS BELLS

Come, Death, I'd have a word with thee ;  
And thou, poor Innocency ;  
And Love—a lad with broken wing ;  
And Pity, too :  
The Fool shall sing to you,  
As Fools will sing.

Aye, music hath small sense.  
And a time's soon told,  
And Earth is old,  
And my poor wits are dense ;  
Yet I have secrets,—dark, my dear,  
To breathe you all : Come near.  
And lest some hideous listener tells,  
I'll ring the bells.

They're all at war !  
Yes, yes, their bodies go  
'Neath burning sun and icy star  
To chaunted songs of woe,  
Dragging cold cannon through a mire  
Of rain and blood and spouting fire,  
The new moon glinting hard on eyes  
Wide with insanities !

Hush ! . . . I use words  
I hardly know the meaning of ;  
And the mute birds  
Are glancing at Love  
From out their shade of leaf and flower,  
Trembling at treacheries  
Which even in noonday cower.

Heed, heed not what I said  
Of frenzied hosts of men,  
More fools than I,  
On envy, hatred fed,  
Who kill, and die—  
Spake I not plainly, then ?  
Yet Pity whispered, ‘ Why ? ’

Walter  
de la  
Mare

Thou silly thing, off to thy daisies go.  
Mine was not news for child to know,  
And Death—no ears hath. He hath supped where  
    creep

Eyeless worms in hush of sleep ;  
Yet, when he smiles, the hand he draws  
Athwart his grinning jaws—  
Faintly the thin bones rattle and . . . there, there,  
Hearken how my bells in the air  
Drive away care ! . . .

Nay, but a dream I had  
Of a world all mad.  
Not simple happy mad like me,  
Who am mad like an empty scene  
Of water and willow tree,  
Where the wind hath been ;  
But that foul Satan-mad,  
Who rots in his own head,  
And counts the dead,  
Not honest one—and two—  
But for the ghosts they were,  
Brave, faithful, true,  
When, head in air,  
In Earth’s clear green and blue  
Heaven they did share  
With Beauty who bade them there. . . .

Walter  
de la  
Mare

There, now!—Death goes—  
Mayhap I have wearied him...  
Aye, and the light doth dim,  
And asleep's the rose,  
And tired Innocence  
In dreams is hence. . . .  
Come, Love, my lad,  
Nodding that drowsy head,  
'Tis time thy prayers were said.

WILLIAM H. DAVIES



## THE WHITE CASCADE

William H.  
Davies

What happy mortal sees that mountain now,  
The white cascade that's shining on its brow ;

The white cascade that's both a bird and star,  
That has a ten-mile voice and shines as far ?

Though I may never leave this land again,  
Yet every spring my mind must cross the main

To hear and see that water-bird and star  
That on the mountain sings, and shines so far.

What exultations in my mind,  
From the love-bite of this Easter wind !  
My head thrown back, my face doth shine  
Like yonder Sun's, but warmer mine.  
A butterfly—from who knows where—  
Comes with a stagger through the air,  
And, lying down, doth ope and close  
His wings, as babies work their toes :  
Perhaps he thinks of pressing tight  
Into his wings a little light !  
And many a bird hops in between  
The leaves he dreams of, long and green,  
And sings for nipple-buds that show  
Where the full-breasted leaves must grow.

## RAPTURES

William H.  
Davies

Sing for the sun your lyric, lark,  
    Of twice ten thousand notes ;  
Sing for the moon, you nightingales,  
    Whose light shall kiss your throats ;  
Sing, sparrows, for the soft warm rain,  
    To wet your feathers through ;  
And when a rainbow's in the sky,  
    Sing you, cuckoo—Cuckoo !

Sing for your five blue eggs, fond thrush,  
    By many a leaf concealed ;  
You starlings, wrens, and blackbirds, sing  
    In every wood and field :  
While I, who fail to give my love  
    Long raptures twice as fine,  
Will for her beauty breathe this one—  
    A sigh, that's more divine.

I hear it said yon land is poor,  
In spite of those rich cowslips there—  
And all the singing larks it shoots  
To heaven from the cowslips' roots.  
But I, with eyes that beauty find,  
And music ever in my mind,  
Feed my thoughts well upon that grass  
Which starves the horse, the ox, and ass.  
So here I stand, two miles to come  
To Shapwick and my ten-days-home,  
Taking my summer's joy, although  
The distant clouds are dark and low,  
And comes a storm that, fierce and strong,  
Has brought the Mendip hills along :  
Those hills that when the light is there  
Are many a sunny mile from here.

**GORDON BOTTOMLEY**



ATLANTIS

Gordon  
Bottomley

What poets sang in Atlantis ? Who can tell  
The epics of Atlantis or their names ?  
The sea hath its own murmurs, and sounds not  
The secrets of its silences beneath,  
And knows not any cadences enfolded  
When the last bubbles of Atlantis broke  
Among the quieting of its heaving floor.

O, years and tides and leagues and all their billows  
Can alter not man's knowledge of men's hearts—  
While trees and rocks and clouds include our being  
We know the epics of Atlantis still :  
A hero gave himself to lesser men,  
Who first misunderstood and murdered him,  
And then misunderstood and worshipped him ;  
A woman was lovely and men fought for her,  
Towns burnt for her, and men put men in bondage,  
But she put lengthier bondage on them all ;  
A wanderer toiled among all the isles  
That fleck this turning star of shifting sea,  
Or lonely purgatories of the mind,  
In longing for his home or his lost love.

Poetry is founded on the hearts of men :  
Though in Nirvana or the Heavenly courts  
The principle of beauty shall persist,  
Its body of poetry, as the body of man,  
Is but a terrene form, a terrene use,  
That swifter being will not loiter with ;  
And, when mankind is dead and the world cold,  
Poetry's immortality will pass.

O, Cartmel bells ring soft to-night,  
And Cartmel bells ring clear,  
But I lie far away to-night,  
Listening with my dear ;

Listening in a frosty land  
Where all the bells are still  
And the small-windowed bell-towers stand  
Dark under heath and hill.

I thought that, with each dying year,  
As long as life should last  
The bells of Cartmel I should hear  
Ring out an aged past :

The plunging, mingling sounds increase  
Darkness's depth and height,  
The hollow valley gains more peace  
And ancientness to-night :

The loveliness, the fruitfulness,  
The power of life lived there  
Return, revive, more closely press  
Upon that midnight air.

But many deaths have place in men  
Before they come to die ;  
Joys must be used and spent, and then  
Abandoned and passed by.

Earth is not ours ; no cherished space  
Can hold us from life's flow,  
That bears us thither and thence by ways  
We knew not we should go.

Gordon  
Bottomley

O, Cartmel bells ring loud, ring clear,  
Through midnight deep and hoar,  
A year new-born, and I shall hear  
The Cartmel bells no more.

Gordon  
Bottomley

IN MEMORIAM, A. M. W.

SEPTEMBER 1910

*(For a Solemn Music)*

Out of a silence  
The voice of music speaks.

When words have no more power,  
When tears can tell no more,  
The heart of all regret  
Is uttered by a falling wave  
Of melody.

No more, no more  
The voice that gathered us  
Shall hush us with deep joy ;  
But in this hush,  
Out of its silence,  
In the awaking of music,  
It shall return.

For music can renew  
Its gladness and communion,  
Until we also sink,  
Where sinks the voice of music,  
Into a silence.

MAURICE BARING



## IN MEMORIAM, A. H.

Maurice  
Baring

(*Auberon Herbert, Captain Lord Lucas, R.F.C.  
killed November 3, 1916*)

Νωμᾶται δὲν ἀπρυγέτω χάει

The wind had blown away the rain  
That all day long had soaked the level plain.  
Against the horizon's fiery wrack,  
The sheds loomed black.  
And higher, in their tumultuous concourse met,  
The streaming clouds, shot-riddled banners, wet  
With the flickering storm,  
Drifted and smouldered, warm  
With flashes sent  
From the lower firmament.  
And they concealed—  
They only here and there through rifts revealed  
A hidden sanctuary of fire and light,  
A city of chrysolite.

We looked and laughed and wondered, and I said :  
That orange sea, those oriflammes outspread  
Were like the fanciful imaginings  
That the young painter flings  
Upon the canvas bold,  
Such as the sage and the old  
Make mock at, saying it could never be ;  
And you assented also, laughingly.  
I wondered what they meant,  
That flaming firmament,  
Those clouds so grey so gold, so wet so warm,  
So much of glory and so much of storm,  
The end of the world, or the end  
Of the war—remoter still to me and you, my friend.

Maurice  
Baring

Alas ! it meant not this, it meant not that :  
It meant that now the last time you and I  
Should look at the golden sky,  
And the dark fields large and flat,  
And smell the evening weather,  
And laugh and talk and wonder both together.

The last, last time. We nevermore should meet  
In France or London street,  
Or fields of home. The desolated space  
Of life shall nevermore  
Be what it was before.  
No one shall take your place.  
No other face  
Can fill that empty frame.  
There is no answer when we call your name.  
We cannot hear your step upon the stair.  
We turn to speak and find a vacant chair.  
Something is broken which we cannot mend.  
God has done more than take away a friend  
In taking you ; for all that we have left  
Is bruised and irremediably bereft.  
There is none like you. Yet not that alone  
Do we bemoan ;  
But this ; that you were greater than the rest,  
And better than the best.

O liberal heart fast-rooted to the soil,  
O lover of ancient freedom and proud toil,  
Friend of the gipsies and all wandering song,  
The forest's nursling and the favoured child  
Of woodlands wild—  
O brother to the birds and all things free,  
Captain of liberty !

Deep in your heart the restless seed was sown ;  
The vagrant spirit fretted in your feet ;  
We wondered could you tarry long,  
And brook for long the cramping street,  
Or would you one day sail for shores unknown,  
And shake from you the dust of towns, and spurn  
The crowded market-place—and not return ?  
You found a sterner guide ;  
You heard the guns. Then, to their distant fire,  
Your dreams were laid aside ;  
And on that day, you cast your heart's desire  
Upon a burning pyre ;  
You gave your service to the exalted need,  
Until at last from bondage freed,  
At liberty to serve as you loved best,  
You chose the noblest way. God did the rest.

Maurice  
Baring

So when the spring of the world shall shrive our  
stain,  
After the winter of war,  
When the poor world awakes to peace once more,  
After such night of ravage and of rain,  
You shall not come again.  
You shall not come to taste the old spring weather,  
To gallop through the soft untrampled heather,  
To bathe and bake your body on the grass.  
We shall be there, alas !  
But not with you. When Spring shall wake the  
earth,  
And quicken the scarred fields to the new birth,  
Our grief shall grow. For what can Spring renew  
More fiercely for us than the need of you ?

That night I dreamt they sent for me and said  
That you were missing, 'missing, missing—dead' :

Maurice  
Baring

I cried when in the morning I awoke,  
And all the world seemed shrouded in a cloak ;  
But when I saw the sun,  
And knew another day had just begun,  
I brushed the dream away, and quite forgot  
The nightmare's ugly blot.  
So was the dream forgot. The dream came true.  
Before the night I knew  
That you had flown away into the air  
For ever. Then I cheated my despair.  
I said  
That you were safe—or wounded—but not dead.  
Alas ! I knew  
Which was the false and true.

And after days of watching, days of lead,  
There came the certain news that you were dead.  
You had died fighting, fighting against odds,  
Such as in war the gods  
Æthereal dared when all the world was young ;  
Such fighting as blind Homer never sung,  
Nor Hector nor Achilles never knew,  
High in the empty blue.  
High, high, above the clouds, against the setting  
sun,  
The fight was fought, and your great task was  
done.

Of all your brave adventures this the last  
The bravest was and best ;  
Meet ending to a long embattled past,  
This swift, triumphant, fatal quest,  
Crowned with the wreath that never perisheth,  
And diadem of honourable death ;

Swift Death afame with offering supreme  
And mighty sacrifice,  
More than all mortal dream ;  
A soaring death, and near to Heaven's gate ;  
Beneath the very walls of Paradise.  
Surely with soul elate,  
You heard the destined bullet as you flew,  
And surely your prophetic spirit knew  
That you had well deserved that shining fate.

Maurice  
Baring

Here is no waste,  
No burning Might-have-been,  
No bitter after-taste,  
None to censure, none to screen,  
Nothing awry, nor anything misspent ;  
Only content, content beyond content,  
Which hath not any room for betterment.

God, Who had made you valiant, strong and swift,  
And maimed you with a bullet long ago,  
And cleft your riotous ardour with a rift,  
And checked your youth's tumultuous overflow,  
Gave back your youth to you,  
And packed in moments rare and few  
Achievements manifold  
And happiness untold,  
And bade you spring to Death as to a bride,  
In manhood's ripeness, power and pride,  
And on your sandals the strong wings of youth.  
He let you leave a name  
To shine on the entablatures of truth,  
For ever :  
To sound for ever in answering halls of fame.

Maurice  
Baring

For you soared onwards to that world which rags  
Of clouds, like tattered flags,  
Concealed ; you reached the walls of chrysolite,  
The mansions white ;  
And losing all, you gained the civic crown  
Of that eternal town,  
Wherein you passed a rightful citizen  
Of the bright commonwealth ablaze beyond our  
ken.

Surely you found companions meet for you  
In that high place ;  
You met there face to face  
Those you had never known, but whom you knew :  
Knights of the Table Round,  
And all the very brave, the very true,  
With chivalry crowned ;  
The captains rare,  
Courteous and brave beyond our human air ;  
Those who had loved and suffered overmuch,  
Now free from the world's touch.  
And with them were the friends of yesterday,  
Who went before and pointed you the way ;  
And in that place of freshness, light and rest,  
Where Lancelot and Tristram vigil keep  
Over their King's long sleep,  
Surely they made a place for you,  
Their long-expected guest,  
Among the chosen few,  
And welcomed you, their brother and their friend,  
To that companionship which hath no end.

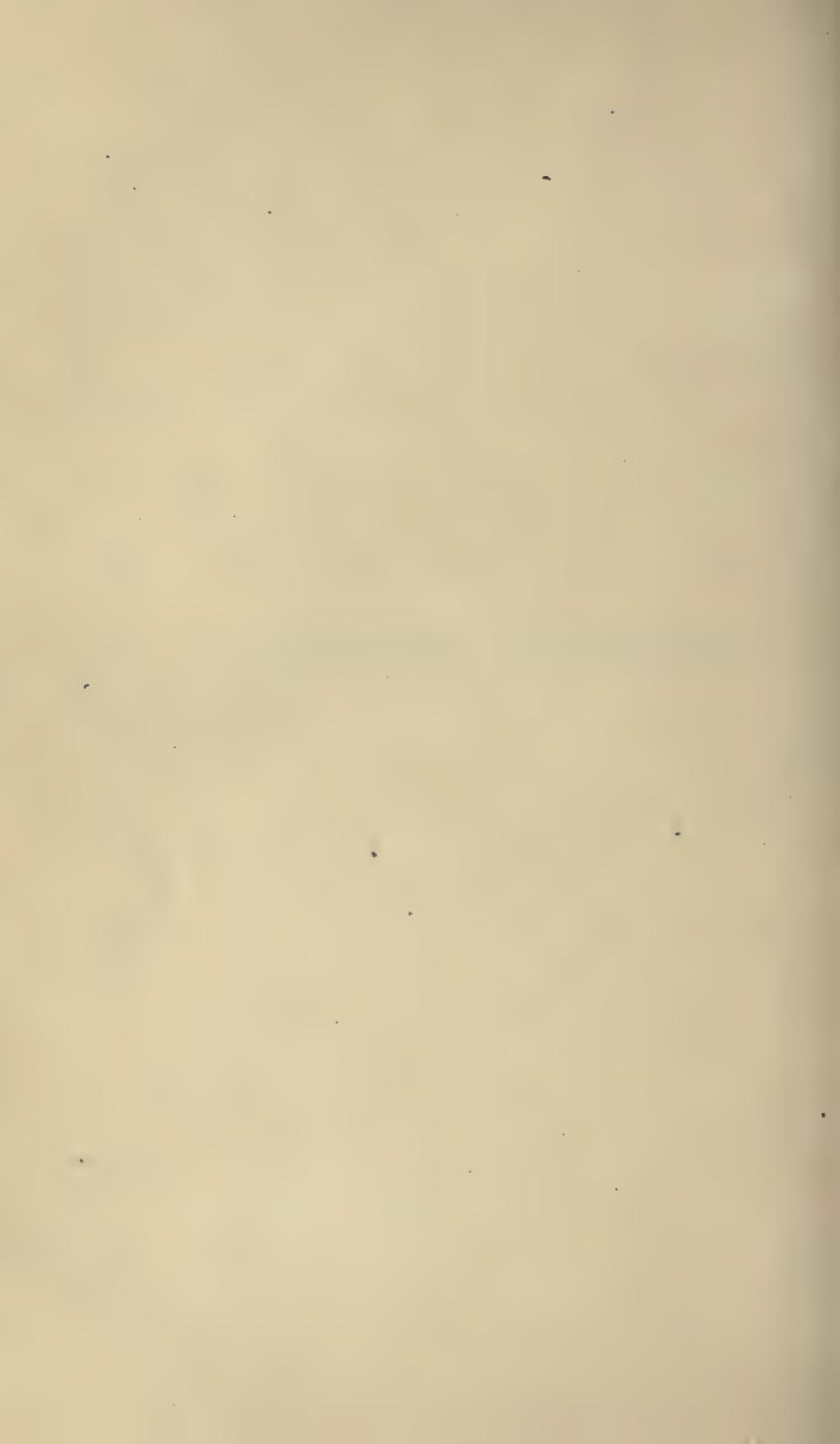
And in the portals of the sacred hall  
You hear the trumpet's call,

At dawn upon the silvery battlement,  
Re-echo through the deep  
And bid the sons of God to rise from sleep,  
And with a shout to hail  
The sunrise on the city of the Grail :  
The music that proud Lucifer in Hell  
Missed more than all the joys that he forwent.  
You hear the solemn bell  
At vespers, when the oriflammes are furled ;  
And then you know that somewhere in the world,  
That shines far-off beneath you like a gem,  
They think of you, and when you think of them  
You know that they will wipe away their tears,  
And cast aside their fears ;  
That they will have it so,  
And in no otherwise ;  
That it is well with them because they know,  
With faithful eyes,  
Fixed forward and turned upwards to the skies,  
That it is well with you,  
Among the chosen few,  
Among the very brave, the very true.

Maurice  
Baring



# HERBERT ASQUITH

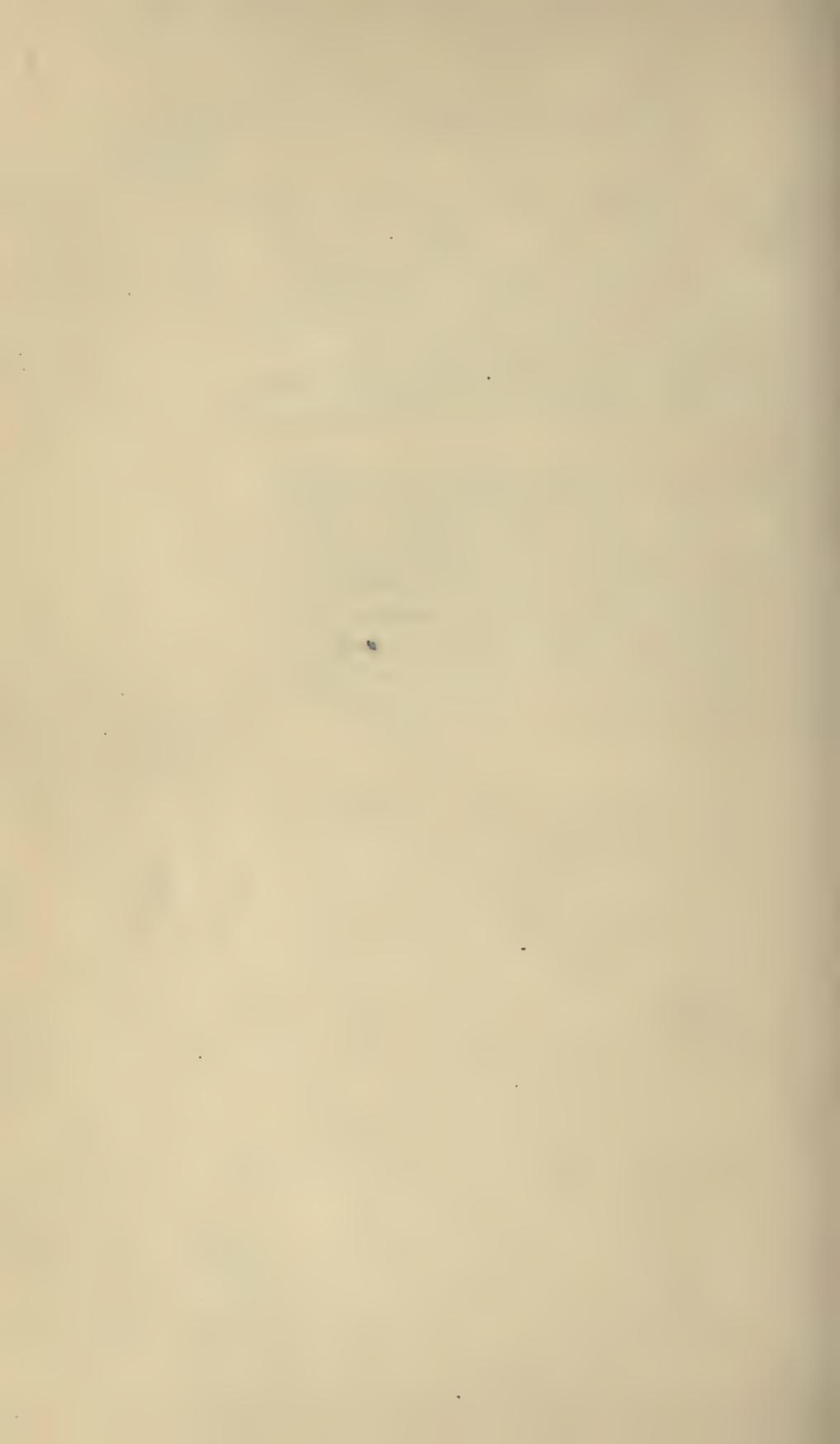


## THE VOLUNTEER

Herbert  
Asquith

Here lies the clerk who half his life had spent  
Toiling at ledgers in a city grey,  
Thinking that so his days would drift away  
With no lance broken in life's tournament :  
Yet ever 'twixt the books and his bright eyes  
The gleaming eagles of the legions came,  
And horsemen, charging under phantom skies,  
Went thundering past beneath the oriflamme.

And now those waiting dreams are satisfied ;  
From twilight to the halls of dawn he went ;  
His lance is broken ; but he lies content  
With that high hour, in which he lived and died.  
And falling thus, he wants no recompense,  
Who found his battle in the last resort ;  
Nor needs he any hearse to bear him hence,  
Who goes to join the men of Agincourt.



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Songs from the Clay	Macmillan	1915
Adventures of Seumas Beg	"	1915
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